



Department of Sociology
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“There Cannot Be a Free Body When the Soul Is In Captivity”: Religion and National Identity in Three Ukrainian Presidents’ Rhetoric, 2010-2022

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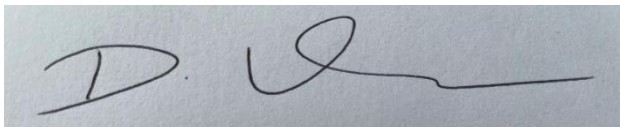
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Abstract

The ongoing full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation has sparked a global interest in Ukraine. Whilst there is extensive scholarship on the relationship between religion, politics and national identity in Ukraine, there is a lack of synthesised, comparative and process-tracing work on how an incumbent's religious politics is influenced by their predecessor(s) or how they may influence their successor(s). This thesis examines how three Ukrainian presidents – Viktor Yanukovych, Petro Poroshenko and Volodymyr Zelenskyy – have used religious ideas and rhetoric as part of their political agendas and to support their ideas of Ukrainian national identity.

This thesis uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse presidential speeches, through which a process is traced mapping the development of religious politics in Ukraine across the three presidencies. Using this method, the thesis argues that religion in Ukraine is intertwined with nationalism and that the influence of religion on politics and national identity is itself influenced by other factors, i.e. geopolitical developments. The use of religious rhetoric by the current president, Zelenskyy, demonstrates the continuing influence of religion in Ukrainian politics, from which avenues for further research can be proposed.

Key Words: Ukraine, Orthodoxy, National Identity, Religious Politics, Autocephaly, Securitisation, Critical Discourse Analysis

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Chapter One: Introduction

On the 1st December 2022 Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, gave a televised address to the Ukrainian people, as he has done since the start of Russia's full scale invasion on 24th February 2022. The theme of the address was Ukraine's independence and it was delivered on the 31st anniversary of the referendum through which Ukraine became an independent nation. Zelenskyy, referencing the sham referenda recently held in Russian-occupied parts of the country, hailed that referendum as 'a real referendum, not some kind of imitation...' (01/12/22), before turning to the crux of the address, what he termed 'spiritual independence' (01/12/22). The rest of the address outlines plans developed by his administration to counter the influence of religious groups linked to Russia, something which the President presents as a key issue of national security. Given how recently this address was delivered, it can be seen as a culmination of the tensions between the Ukrainian state and religious groups linked to Moscow – most notably the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) - and indicative of the continuing social and political influence wielded by religion in Ukraine, an influence which has been the source of much political debate, especially since 2014.

This brings us to the topic of this thesis: the use of religious ideas and rhetoric by Ukrainian presidents to shape and inform their political agendas and ideas of national identity. The quote included in the title of this thesis – '...there cannot be a free body when the soul is in captivity...' from a speech by Petro Poroshenko (31/08/18) – shows the importance of religion in Ukraine in debates on sovereignty and identity. The religion of focus is Orthodox Christianity, the dominant religion in Ukraine. Although religion and politics are separated by Article 35 of the Constitution, politicians since 1991 have inserted themselves into religious debates and at times have benefitted from the presence of religious figures and institutions within their support networks. The role of religion in Ukrainian politics has varied across time, but with each President since 1991 generally adhering to the idea of religious tolerance and pluralism (Shlikhta, 2016: 135). A significant focus of this thesis is the political role and influence of the UOC-MP. From Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991 the UOC-MP was the dominant Christian denomination, with 38.7% of all parishes under its control in 1997, and a peak of 12,673 parishes by January 2014 during the events of Euromaidan (Hudson, 2018: 1360-1361). Following the Revolution of Dignity, in which Viktor Yanukovich, the former governor of Donetsk, was removed from office, the role of the UOC-MP and its links

to the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) – and by association the government of the Russian Federation – came under heavy scrutiny; the church itself was seen by some as little more than a soft power tool of the Russian state. Since 2014 questions of religion have therefore been at the heart of Ukrainian politics. For those who came to power after Yanukovich religion became a matter of national security, something which could prove detrimental to the nation when tied to a hostile power. This was especially the case following Russia’s illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and the start of the War in Donbas. Despite this securitising atmosphere, best represented by the presidency of Petro Poroshenko, there remained disagreement in post-Maidan Ukraine as to which direction the country should take. This, combined with disappointment at unfulfilled promises made in the wake of Maidan and the retention of power in the hands of an oligarchic class with vested business, financial, and political interests, formed the backdrop to the election of the current President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to examine how religious ideas, discourse and rhetoric have been used by three Ukrainian presidents to support their wider political ideologies and their ideas on Ukrainian national identity in the 21st century. The research design of the thesis combines a comparison of the three presidents and process-tracing to examine how the religious policies of one president have influenced another, and how the role of religion in Ukrainian politics has evolved in response to events. The research puzzle for the thesis is empirical and focuses on developments in the role of religion in Ukrainian politics. I argue there is a lack of synthesis in the study of Ukrainian presidents, of how religious policy develops between presidencies and how the influence of religion in politics varies over time and in response to other factors, i.e. geopolitical developments. To help address the research puzzle, the following research questions will be addressed:

- What role has religion played in informing ideas of Ukrainian national identity under three different presidential administrations?
- Why has religion in Ukraine become so heavily tied to politics, despite the separation of Church and State outlined in the Constitution?
- What is the importance of religion in Ukraine’s relationship with the Russian Federation and debates on Ukraine’s future between East and West?

The relevance of the topic is demonstrated by the opening anecdote for this chapter; religion in Ukraine continues to hold strong social and political influence. Since 2014 Russian aggression against Ukraine has caused a shift in the Ukrainian religious landscape, especially after the ousting of Yanukovich before which the UOC-MP enjoyed privileged status as the preferred church of the Presidential administration. The UOC-MP has in many areas been abandoned, with parishioners voting to transfer the jurisdiction of their parishes to, before 2019, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP), and after 2019, the newly established Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU); the latter was founded by the granting of a Tomos of Autocephaly (document of independence) from the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I. Both presidents Poroshenko and Zelenskyy have portrayed religion as a key security issue for the country and an integral element of complete Ukrainian independence, political and spiritual, from the Russian Federation.

Structure of the Thesis

Following this introduction is chapter two, *Conceptual Framework and Literature Review*, in which I outline the key concepts for studying religion and national identity in the political sphere, theories of national identity construction and a method for the study of religion and national identity developed by Rogers Brubaker. Brubaker's method treats religion as a key element in the development of national identity and is therefore extremely useful for examining the history of religion in Ukraine and its use to inform ideas of Ukrainian national identity since 1991. This is followed by an examination of the relationship between religion and national identity in two presidential systems - the United States and the Russian Federation - which can be compared to Ukraine and, finally, an examination of the literature on religion and national identity in Ukraine. In chapter three, *Methodology and Research Design*, I outline how I use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse political speeches. CDA is a method of analysis which emphasises the importance of ideology in relation to power and through the use of which we can better understand what Norman Fairclough called 'constructions of reality' (1992: 87) and how these have influenced the religious policies of the three presidents. This section will also outline the limitations placed on the research, such as access to physical sources and language barriers. Chapter four, *Process Tracing and Developments in Religious Policy and Religious Politics Across Three Ukrainian Presidencies*, provides a detailed background of each of the presidents under examination. The purpose of the chapter is to properly contextualise the religious politics of the three within the general political

atmospheres which characterised their presidencies, and which continue to do so in the case of Zelenskyy. In chapter five, *Religious Rhetoric in Ukrainian Presidents' Political Speeches*, I present my findings based on the analysis of the sources collected.

Finally, chapter six, *conclusion*, reflects on the findings outlined in chapter five as they relate to existing work in the literature review, how they fit into the wider theoretical discussions on the topic, and how they help to answer the research puzzle and questions posited above. This section will end with suggestions for future avenues of research into the topic of religion and politics in Ukraine.

Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

This thesis examines the role of religion in Ukrainian politics under three different presidents – Viktor Yanukovich, Petro Poroshenko, and Volodymyr Zelensky – and analyses how religion has been used politically to influence ideas of national identity in Ukraine. To do this it is necessary to understand the historical context of religion in Ukraine and how the political role of religion has varied across time. The aim of this review of the conceptual and empirical literature is firstly to provide a brief analysis of how scholars have approached the relationship between religion and politics from a theoretical perspective and to draw out the theoretical and conceptual approaches which I will use to inform my own research, alongside empirical historical details. Secondly, the aim of this chapter is to zoom in to focus on the specific case of Ukraine and review the literature on the empirical cases.

Key Concepts for Studying Religion and National Identity in the Political Sphere

Religion

Orthodoxy is a denomination of Christianity predominantly practiced in those parts of the world which were either under the control of Byzantium or within its sphere of influence, i.e. Russia, Ukraine, Greece, Bulgaria, etc. The history of Orthodoxy is closely tied to the history of the Byzantine Empire, following the conversion of Constantine the Great in 312AD. His founding of a new capital, Constantinople, and the removal of political power from Rome began a dispute between the Romans and Constantinopolitans over which city should hold ecclesiastical supremacy, a dispute which would culminate in the Great Schism of 1054 (Siecieski, 2019: 12). Since Constantine's dream before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, Orthodox Christianity has grown to become the second-largest Christian church with sixteen autocephalous churches across the world, from Constantinople, to Ukraine, to the Orthodox Church in America.

The issue of how to define religion is divisive amongst social scientists and can perhaps best be summarised by a question from a 1958 survey of social scientists by Walter Houston Clark: 'What do you study when you study religion?' (1958: 143). The analysis of 68 replies from scholars across the social sciences attempted to gauge the differences between disciplines (i.e. theology, sociology, psychology), from which a common definition of religion could be formulated. However, the disagreements continue to divide scholars and remain the focus of

extensive academic work; as John Hinnells notes: ‘There have been endless discussions of the definition of ‘religion’’ (2009: 6). Since the focus of this thesis is the study of the relationship between religion and politics, it is necessary that I outline what I believe to be the best way to define religion for the purposes of this research topic. There has also been scholarly debate on the differences between religion and culture. Hinnells notes that ‘...some scholars have argued for avoiding the word ‘religion as meaningless and have argued instead for the term ‘culture’’, but himself argues that ‘...it is often difficult to say which came first, the religion or the values and ideals (culture) – but basically it does not matter; they are now part of an intricate network’ (2009:8). In the interest of staying on topic, I adopt Hinnells’ perspective on this issue.

In *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, Andre Droogers outlines several approaches taken by academics to define religion, arguing that for the social sciences ‘...the task of defining religion can be characterised as a necessary, exploratory, and useful task, but also a superfluous, impossible, and ethnocentric activity’ (2011: 264). Egon Guba in *The Paradigm Dialog* (1990) argued that there are three dimensions to scientific activity which can be applied to seeking a definition of religion: *ontological, epistemological, and methodological*. The first poses the question ‘What can be said about the nature of religion?’; the second, ‘What is the relation of the definer with religion as the phenomenon to be defined?’; the third deals with ‘...the way in which the definer should technically proceed with defining religion. It concerns what a definition is meant to do...’ (2009: 264). Droogers argues that an obstacle to a definition of religion along scientific methods is that science and religion are seen as irreconcilable opposites. However, by drawing on the work of others such as Berger (1967) and Van Baal and Van Beek (1985), Droogers argues that a scientific definition of religion is made possible when the expectation of an empirical basis for religious belief is abandoned and conditions created where ‘...the believers’ praxis can at least be observed empirically and described accordingly – for example, showing the social or psychological functions of their belief’ (2009: 266). This suspension of empiricism, what Berger (1967) defined as a methodological agnosticism, ‘...characterised by neutrality with regard to the matter of religious truth...’ allows for a judgement free definition of religion which allows social scientists to study the nature of religion without commenting on the truth of their religion of focus (Droogers, 2011: 268).

A further obstacle to defining religion for social scientists is disagreements over the best type of definition, in this case substantive vs functional. The key problem with trying to create one central definition of religion for the social sciences is that different disciplines are bound to

define religion differently: ‘Whereas sociologists will probably look for the social dimension of religion... anthropologists tend to draw attention to religion as a cultural phenomenon, and to a certain degree connected with other aspects of culture such as politics...’ (Droogers, 2009: 268). To examine religion for what it is, by the way it is organised and practiced by the religious, is to use a substantive definition of religion which ‘...informs us of what the sacred is...’ (Droogers, 2009: 269). To examine the social and political consequences of religion is to use a functional definition which ‘...moves the focus to the uses that religion can be put to...’ (Droogers, 2009: 269). Yet even with these categories there are disagreements amongst social scientists as to the appropriateness of seeking definitive definitions of religion. For example, Droogers cites Asad, who argued that there could not be a universal definition of religion ‘...not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes... a transhistorical definition of religion is not viable’ (Droogers, 2009: 273, quote from Asad, 1993: 29-30). Conversely, Bruce argues that while an ‘...ahistorical definition of religion...is impossible...’ there are certain observable qualities than can be said to apply to religions generally across time and place and therefore it is possible to produce a substantive definition of religion (2011).

While it is therefore difficult to formulate a single, universal definition of religion, the work of social scientists in the study of religion has provided a mix of definitions and approaches that can be used to study religion in different ways and for different purposes. This thesis, in examining the political role played by religion in a society, follows a functional definition of religion because it focuses on ‘...the uses that religion can be put to, consciously or unconsciously’ (Droogers, 2009: 269). Because I do not intend to pass any judgements on the truth of the religion that I am focusing on, I take a position of methodological agnosticism, focusing on the political role and use of Orthodox Christianity in Ukraine, rather than the empirical truth of the religion itself.

National Identity Building

The sociological study of national identity is a recent development stemming from the growth of academic interest in nationalism from the 1970s onwards, and one that continues to divide scholars. Verdugo and Milne note that such is the difficulty of studying national identity that ‘...some scholars have called for abandoning the concept entirely...’ (2016: 1-2). However, despite these difficulties there is extensive literature on national identity and various ways of understanding it proposed by scholars. The most useful for this thesis is the theory of

constructivism which posits that identities are constructed for political purposes ‘...by dominant groups in order to gain and maintain their privileged status in society’ (Verdugo and Milne, 2016: 5). Perhaps the most influential work on constructivism is Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* in which the author argues that national identities emerge when people can see themselves as part of a larger community of people, the majority of whom they will never meet. Influential in this was the growth of printing and print-languages in the early modern period between the sacral languages of religious communication and local vernaculars which ‘...created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation’ (Anderson, 2006: 46). In this thesis I use constructivist theories of national identity building to argue that in Ukraine national identity has been defined and redefined by the differing interests of political elites across time.

Verdugo and Milne argue that ‘...scholars tend to agree that national identity is a sense of ‘belonging’ to a nation or state...’ and that ‘...many would agree that this sense of belonging is affected by many factors, including relational, normative, contextual, kinship, and historical factors’ (2016: 2). The importance of these factors is where disagreements begin to arise amongst scholars. In contrast to the factors emphasised by constructivism, what Verdugo and Milne summarise as a state ‘...where membership and belonging is based on shared civic values about citizenship...’, there are Essentialist or Primordialist viewpoints which emphasise ‘...blood, ethnicity, history, ancestry, common values, kinship, and language’ (2016: 3). Wodak et al summarise the arguments made by scholars in favour of viewing nations as ‘imagined communities’, such as Stuart Hall (1996) who argues that national identity – what he calls ‘national culture’ – has five fundamental aspects incorporating both essentialist and constructivist elements, such as ‘...the *emphasis on origins, continuity, tradition, and timelessness..*’ for the former and ‘...the *invention of tradition...*’ for the latter (Wodak et al, 2019: 24). It would be erroneous to argue that national identity – as a product of nationalism – is entirely artificial and imagined for political purposes, therefore this chapter gives due attention to the role of such essentialist factors as language, history and kinship in presentations of national identity in Ukrainian presidents’ rhetoric. Questions of continuity are therefore important for theories of national identity formation.

Rogers Brubaker: Religion and National Identity

As noted in the introduction, I take a theoretical approach devised by Rogers Brubaker which ‘...sees religion not as something outside nationalism that helps to explain it, but as so deeply imbricated or intertwined with nationalism as to be part of the phenomenon...’ (2012: 8-9). This approach is useful for a study of religious developments in Ukraine as it approaches religion as an integral part of national development. Brubaker argues that religion intertwines with national development by providing ‘...myths, metaphors, and symbols that are central to the discursive or iconic representation of the nation.’ He continues that this approach best answers questions of identity such as ‘...who are we?’ and ‘...what is distinctive about us as a people, in terms of our history, character, identity, mission, or destiny’ (2012: 9).’ This latter question is especially important for a study of the relationship between religion, politics, and national identity in Ukraine, where the Kyivan State and Orthodox Church developed together.

Brubaker’s approach is especially useful for examining the growing links between religion, politics, and national identity in Ukraine since 2014. The events of late 2013 and the creation of the OCU in 2018/2019 marked an acceleration of religious trends in independent Ukraine beginning with a religious revival in the final years of Soviet control. Heather J. Coleman argues that these years were ‘...characterised by both religious revival and a rise in nationalist sentiment...’ as well as ‘...a widespread sense that the new state required a united Ukrainian Orthodox Church independent of Moscow’ (2020: 422). The idea that an independent Ukrainian Church could aid the development of a sovereign Ukrainian state is not a new idea but rather a continuation of older ideas about the importance of religion for the security and development of the state and national identity, stretching back to Kyivan Rus’.

Securitisation Theory

Throughout the analysis in chapter five, particularly when discussing the Poroshenko presidency, I mention securitisation theory and the securitisation of religion in post-Euromaidan Ukraine. It is therefore necessary to provide a brief explanation of what securitisation theory is and how it can aid in understanding how and why religion has become an issue of national security and sovereignty since 2014.

Securitisation theory comes from the Copenhagen School group of scholars, with the term itself coming from Ole Wæver who, with Barry Buzan and Jaap de Wilde, developed the theory to explain how political issues become matters of ‘security’, making them essential to the survival

of the state. Key to securitisation theory are what the above scholars called ‘speech acts’, through which an issue is addressed and moves from the political to the security sphere and an audience is convinced of the need to securitise an issue. Securitisation is therefore evident when:

...if by means of an argument about the priority and urgency of an existential threat the securitising actor has managed to break free of procedures or rules he or she would otherwise be bound by... (Buzan et al, 1997:25).

Securitisation is therefore a departure from the standard rules-of-the-game, in this case the separation of religion and politics enshrined in the Ukrainian constitution. Religion in Ukraine has been constructed as an issue of existential importance since 2014. Buzan et al identify the four factors of securitisation: a securitising actor, an existential threat, a referent object, and an audience (1997: 23-26). For this thesis these are, in order: the President (Poroshenko followed by Zelenskyy – securitising actor); Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church/Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (existential threat); Ukrainian sovereignty and national security (referent object); and the Ukrainian people, especially Orthodox Ukrainians (audience). Securitisation theory is useful here alongside the Brubaker methodology because in the political speeches of Poroshenko and Zelenskyy we see these four factors clearly used and the securitisation of religion is useful for addressing the questions posed by Brubaker. By securitising an issue, Ukrainian political actors are demonstrating the importance of that issue for addressing ‘...who are we...’ and ‘what is distinctive about us as a people, in terms of our history, character, identity, mission, or destiny?’.

Use of Religious Discourse by Political Actors

There is already an extensive body of scholarship on the use of religious discourse by political actor. Since this thesis focuses on the use of such discourse by presidents, it is useful to examine how scholars have studied the use of religious discourse in semi- and full-presidential systems. In this section I analyse two bodies of scholarship, dealing with Russia and the United States to demonstrate how religious rhetoric has been used by presidents to support their political agendas and how religion has been incorporated into their wider ideologies. I will then apply these insights from the literature to the Ukrainian case.

I chose to use Russia and the United States because of how scholars on these countries have approached the study of religious discourse in politics and the politicisation of religion. During

my research I found that scholars analysed speeches as I have done here, supporting the validity of speeches as sources. For more recent American presidents, especially Truman, speech analysis yields valuable insights into the importance of religion in the American presidency across time, showing how this importance varies with political and geopolitical changes. In the Russian case, speech analysis yields insights into the politicisation of religion under Putin and the linking of religion to geopolitical and moral conflict. The insights yielded from the two examples are different but both are useful for understanding the use of religious discourse in Ukrainian politics.

The Russian Federation

The use of religious discourse by political elites in post-Soviet Russia is a strong example of an incorporation of religious ideals into politics. Academic work on the use of religious discourse by Vladimir Putin and his elites pays significant attention to the presentation of Russia as a unique civilisation with values at odds with those of the West, which is portrayed as an existential threat to Russia. Rousselet argued that the ROC was instrumental to the formation of the idea of Russia as both a bulwark of traditionalism and a nation under siege and that, paradoxically, an aversion to Western values and retreat to Orthodox tenets can be seen as a result of the isolation of the Soviet Union from the cultural movements of the second half of the 20th century (2015: 58-59). The development in Russia of what Rousselet calls a ‘moral patriotism’ was therefore a response to confusion after the collapse of communism: ‘...it seems that after the opening of Soviet society in the late 1980s a moral crisis has indeed developed, particularly among young people: alcoholism, drug addiction, crime, promiscuity and abortions, the proliferations of sects, and suicide’ (2015: 60).

In response to this perceived crisis, the Russian state has adopted a position of resistance. The incorporation of religious rhetoric into political life is geared toward the development of the image of Russia as a guardian-state of traditionalism and a home for disaffected conservatives worldwide. This recourse to Orthodox morality in the post-Soviet era has been the focus of extensive scholarship, particularly following the promulgation of so-called Anti-Homopropaganda laws in 2013. Wilkinson argued that these laws were ‘...the most tangible manifestations of the recently formalised regime of national moral regulation...’ resulting from an alliance between the ROC and the Kremlin through which Putin guarantees Orthodox support for his regime by pursuing policies popular with the church (Wilkinson, 2014: 366). For Willems a key element of the incorporation of Orthodox values into the political life of

post-Soviet Russia has been the growth of religious education and the development of a national curriculum based on Orthodox tenets through which students ‘...are expected to adopt the uniform Russian tradition as their own and to behave in the ways dictated as appropriate for Russians’ (2012: 35). Willems further argues that this was possible because of a ‘...so called ‘religious renaissance’ in Russia...’ (2012: 30) following the collapse of Communism. Willems notes that in Russia there has been a linking of ethnic and religious identities to create the idea of ‘Orthodox atheists’, people who by virtue of being Russian are necessarily Orthodox even where they do not belong to or practice the faith (2012: 30), reinforcing the idea of Russia as a naturally Orthodox and spiritually unique nation.

What then has been Vladimir Putin’s role in the use of religious discourse in politics and how has it been studied? As noted above various academics have studied the church-state relationship in Russia using different methods. Rousselet studied the role of the church in its own politicisation/securitisation through examining the *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* and the concepts of *Sinfoniya* (church-state harmony) and *Podvig* (spiritual struggle) (2015). Wilkinson examined the conflict between Russia and other nations at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR) over traditional values versus universal rights and the role of the church in this conflict. She argues that ‘...Putin has made adroit use of his alliance with the Russian Orthodox Church since the start of his third term to cement the Church’s loyalty and to capitalise on its societal influence...’ (2014 :368). Wilkinson’s work studying speeches made by Putin to show the importance of the ROC and traditional values for the President’s domestic and foreign agendas is particularly useful for my own analysis of similar sources from Ukraine. Speaking at the 2013 meeting of the Valdai Club, Putin emphasised the moral power and importance of Christianity and furthered the divide between Russia and the West by developing ideas of the latter as a moral vacuum:

We can see how many of the Euro-Atlantic countries are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilisation... They are implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnerships, belief in God with belief in Satan... Without the values embedded in Christianity and other world religions... people will inevitably lose their human dignity. We consider it natural and right to defend these values. (19/09/13).

This appeal to values has been a consistent theme in Putinist rhetoric since the start of his third term in 2012. Even as recently as September 2022, in a speech given after the illegal annexation

of four Ukrainian regions, Putin again accused Western governments of betraying their traditions and suppressing the rights of their populations to hold ‘traditional values’: ‘...the suppression of freedom itself has taken on the features of a religion: outright satanism’ (30/09/22). The inclusion of the ‘traditional values’ rhetoric in this speech shows the prominence of moral and religious discourse in Putin’s foreign policy.

This scholarship on Russia demonstrates the suitability of Brubaker’s approach for the study of the relationship between religion and politics. Putin’s speeches are laden with references to identity as he offers Russians his preferred answers to those questions posed by Brubaker, especially ‘...what is distinctive about us as a people, in terms of our history, character, identity, mission or destiny’. The existing literature shows that there are multiple avenues through which the relationship between religion, politics, and national identity can be studied.

The United States

I have chosen to use the United States as an example because, like Ukraine and Russia, it is a Presidential system in which questions of the appropriate relationship between Church and State have proved contentious, especially because of their separation as guaranteed by the First Amendment. In my research I found that the two American presidents I discuss here, Lincoln and Truman, used religion in similar ways to the Ukrainian presidents I study.

In the edited volume *Religion and the American Presidency* (Rozell & Whitney, 2007), several scholars used presidential speeches to map out how the use of religious discourse by political elites has changed throughout American history. Lucas Morel focused on Abraham Lincoln’s second inaugural address to analyse Lincoln’s ideas of the role of religion in American politics and national identity following the Civil War. Invoking providence, Lincoln uses Christianity to unite a divided people by presenting the war as a divine punishment for the sin of slavery, from which a new era, a ‘new birth of freedom’ as Lincoln called for at Gettysburg, will emerge. This is characteristic of Lincoln’s belief in religion as a moderating influence conducive to good citizenship (2007:74). However, Lincoln’s invocation of providence should not be seen as evidence of theocratic leanings. As President, Lincoln incorporated religious rhetoric into politics whilst maintaining constitutional distances between religion and government. Morel argues that for Lincoln religion was almost unimportant in electoral politics and could distract the electorate from key issues of the day: ‘An undue emphasis on one’s religious beliefs... could easily lead to factious politics... In short, elections should not be

turned into a forum for resolving religious quarrels' (2007: 78). From his writings it is clear that Lincoln saw religion as something far beyond a merely political tool and saw no utility in reducing it to simply a tool of government: '...it existed to fulfil a divine purpose between an individual and God and ought not to be viewed solely in light of its political utility' (2007: 76). For Lincoln then, the answer to Brubaker's questions, was of America as a divinely-guided nation but not one dominated by religious doctrines at the expense of good governance.

Perhaps the strongest example of an American president incorporating religious discourse into their wider policy goals is Harry Truman, whose presidency was dominated by the development of the Cold War. Truman saw the ideological conflict with the USSR as a clash of civilisations with religion at its centre; Spalding argues '...he (Truman) held that religious groups and institutions were more primary than political or strategic alliances to winning the cold war, since the clash was fundamentally between the atheism of communist totalitarianism and the theism of the rest of the world' (Spalding, 2007: 108). Religious discourse was therefore a defining feature of Truman's presidency and foreign policy, in which the United States had a responsibility to lead the fight against communism at the head of a '...world crusade of religions...' (Spalding, 2007: 114). Truman's overt inclusion of religious discourse in his wider policy marked a significant departure from the approach taken by Lincoln. For Truman, the answers to Brubaker's questions were defined by American religion versus Soviet atheism. To an extent Truman's use of religious discourse can be compared to Putin's, in that both outline a special purpose for their nation as unique civilisations by virtue of their adherence to a values system.

The literature on the study of religion and American politics is useful to the study of Ukraine for several reasons. From the two examples we see that American presidents have taken different approaches to the inclusion of religion in the rhetoric of their administrations. This literature on American presidents allows us to better understand the different ways U.S political elites have approached those questions posed in Brubaker's methodology.

Religion and National Identity in Ukraine: Surveying the Key Approaches and Debates in the Field

Having outlined the key concepts relevant for the study of religion and national identity in the political sphere (how to define religion, constructivism, Brubaker's intertwining of religion and nationalism) I now turn to examine in greater depth the scholarship examining how these factors have manifested in the case of Ukraine. This literature review is split into two sections:

‘Orthodoxy and Ukrainian National Identity and History’; and ‘Religious Politics in Contemporary Ukraine’. The first section deals with scholarship on the importance of religion for both historical and contemporary Ukrainian national identity and examines the historical presence of Orthodoxy in the development of Ukrainian statehood. The second section deals with literature on the modern relationship between religion and politics in Ukraine and the political role of religion in Ukraine since 1991. Both sections examine how scholars have studied religion and politics in Ukraine and how these approaches have informed my own.

I conclude the section with what I have identified as gaps in the literature. I argue that there is a lack of synthesis between the studies of individual presidents to effectively show how the religious policies of a leader can be influenced by their predecessor and influence their successor. This can be resolved by examining how the policies of different presidents relate to each other in terms of preferred churches, attitudes towards the role of religion in national identity and security, and use of religious rhetoric.

Orthodoxy and Ukrainian National Identity and History

Religion has historically occupied a key role within the development of the Ukrainian state and Ukrainian national identity. The adoption of Orthodoxy by Volodymyr the Great in 988AD is still seen as a fundamentally important moment in both the history of the region and in the formation of a nascent Ukrainian national identity (Plokyh, 2016: 33,35). The traditional account of how Volodymyr adopted Christianity from Byzantium is regarded with scepticism by academics, who argue that Volodymyr’s conversion was geopolitically pragmatic rather than inspired by accounts of the beauty of the Orthodoxy liturgy in Constantinople: ‘...We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, such was the beauty of that place...’ (Siecienski, 2019: 20). From Volodymyr’s adoption of Orthodoxy the church and state in Kyivan Rus’ developed alongside each other, especially during the reign of Volodymyr’s son Yaroslav the Wise, who worked to distance the Kyivan church from Constantinople and to turn Kyivan Rus’ into ‘... a full-fledged member of the Christian community of nations’ (Plokyh, 2016: 38). However, the sovereignty of this nascent Christian state was complicated by religious politics between Kyiv and Constantinople and the differing preferences between Kyivan princes on the nature of relations with Byzantium (Shubin, 2004: 41,60). Andrew Wilson identifies two separate camps, the pro-autocephaly ‘patriotic evangelic’ group and the pro-Byzantine ‘messianic-Cesaropapist’ group in Kyivan Rus, showing that disagreements on

autocephaly are long-standing and not simply a modern issue between Ukraine and Russia (Wilson, 2000: 12).

These early disagreements on the direction of the Kyivan Church fit with Brubaker's theory of religion as intertwined with nationalism. Through ordaining native Kyivan metropolitans, developing their own style of ecclesiastical architecture and promoting native religious education and literacy, all to the end of creating a national church for Kyivan Rus', Kyivan princes from Volodymyr and Yaroslav onwards were confronting questions of '...what is distinctive about us as a people, in terms of our history, character, identity, mission, or destiny' (2012:9); these questions are at the centre of debates regarding the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church in an independent Ukrainian state. In this section I aim to demonstrate that there is agreement amongst academics that religious issues, especially debates on autocephaly, are a central part of scholarship on the role of religion in Ukrainian politics and national identity. However, there is a lack of synthesis in the scholarship. With my contribution to the discussions I aim to address this lack of synthesis, by demonstrating the continuity of religion in Ukrainian politics across time.

Nicholas Denysenko studied the history of religion and politics in Ukraine to argue that '...every time political changes occur that alter the status quo, a similar battle occurs within the church...' (2020: 429). His approach emphasises the links between Ukrainian religious history and geopolitical shifts, such as a change in the dominant regional power, i.e. the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian Empire, etc. Denysenko argues that the contentious nature of historical religious narratives in Ukraine continues to '...complicate relations and reconciliation within Orthodox Churches...' and explains debates on autocephaly as a continuation of historical trends linking religion to sovereignty:

'If the official position of the Moscow Patriarchate hailed the events of 1686 and 1946 as the reunion of the original city-states of Kyivan Rus', autocephalous minded Ukrainians viewed those events as the artificial interruption of an organic process of a Ukrainian national and ecclesial evolution, one that was achieved only through coercive colonisation ' (2020: 434).

The two dates mentioned refer respectively to the transfer of control over the Kyivan Church to the Moscow Patriarchate in 1686 and the forced unification of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) to the Russian Orthodox Church at the Lviv Council of 1946. For Denysenko then, there is a definite historical link between religious developments and ideas of Ukrainian

sovereignty. Several academics take a similar approach to argue that there is a close historical relationship between religion and (geo)political developments in Ukraine (Coleman, 2020; Kozelsky, 2014). Mara Kozelsky approached the topic from a geographical perspective, arguing that religious issues remain contentious in the Russian-Ukrainian relationship because of the importance of Ukrainian territory in the development of the Orthodox faith in the region. Kozelsky argues that this history undermined Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity after the collapse of the USSR, especially in Crimea where the ROC retained jurisdiction resulting in ‘...a Russifying of Ukrainian and Crimean laity and spiritual space...’ and ‘...an enduring bond with Moscow, a constant reminder of shared past and faith’ (2014: 26). Heather J Coleman approached the topic by studying historical developments linking religious and political developments. Coleman argues that the idea of religious independence as necessary for political independence arose alongside nationalist ideas in the nineteenth century with the emergence of nation-states and, agreeing with Denysenko, that the creation of the OCU in 2019 reflects historical trends in Ukraine since the seventeenth century (2019: 421). Denys Shestopalets approached the linking of ecclesiastical and political independence using securitisation theory, through which the UOC-MP is perceived as ‘...a subversive political organisation managed by the Russian secret services... and existing in Ukraine only for the purposes of serving the interests of the Russian state’ (2020: 719). This was most evident during the Poroshenko presidency which can be seen as a culmination of historical trends tying religion and politics; it was during the Poroshenko presidency that religious autocephaly became the dominant issue. There are, therefore, several approaches to studying the historic links between religion, politics, and national identity in Ukraine.

Securitisation theory, something that Shestopalets argues has ‘...not received as much scholarly attention as other areas of security studies...’, (2020: 713) allows for a more in-depth understanding of the links between religion, national identity and sovereignty. As Rus’ princes differed in their opinions on which city should hold ecclesiastical authority over their church, Kyiv or Constantinople, so too Ukrainian political elites in the post-Soviet era disagreed in their preferences between Kyiv and Moscow. These differences became especially divisive after Euromaidan and Russia’s annexation of Ukrainian territory in 2014, from which time political elites, particularly during the Poroshenko administration, began to view autocephaly as less a solely ecclesiastical matter but one of national importance (Shestopalets, 2019, 2020; Harned, 2022). Much of the Poroshenko administration’s involvement in Church affairs focused on the influence of the UOC-MP, however there is disagreement in the literature on

the accuracy of characterising this church as subversive and an overtly pro-Russian danger to national security (Harned, 2022; Hudson, 2018; Shestopalets, 2019; Yurash, 2005). For example, Victoria Hudson examines the devolved powers of the UOC-MP to argue that to categorise it as an ROC agent is ‘...incongruent with the broad powers of autonomy in crucial aspects of church governance enjoyed by the UOC(MP)’ (2018: 1359).

Religious Politics in Contemporary Ukraine

Religious politics has played a significant role in wider Ukrainian politics since 1991 and in many cases the government’s ecclesiastical policy can be seen as closely tied to its foreign policy and relationship with Russia. As early as the 1994 elections the issue of which city had the right to govern Orthodoxy in Ukraine – Kyiv or Moscow – remained contentious amongst candidates and it was not until the 2004 election and the campaign of Viktor Yushchenko that a new, secular approach to politics emerged, in contrast to that of his opponent, Viktor Yanukovich (Yurash, 2005: 368). Although there has been a general decline in the religiosity of Ukrainians since 2014, as well as a decline in affiliation to the UOC-MP, Harned uses Razumkov Center data from 2021 showing that 60% of Ukrainians continue to identify with the Orthodox faith (2022). However, the same data indicates a relatively low level of enthusiasm for autocephaly – 33% of respondents supporting it – and an increasing opposition to religious nationalism and state involvement in religious affairs, as well as a corresponding increase in support for the separation of church and state (Harned, 2022). This data makes the study of religious politics and the relationship between religion and politics in Ukraine especially important, as the increased representation of religion at the state level seems to contrast with overall public opinion.

By examining the relationship between religion and politics under three presidencies I aim to demonstrate that historical debates on autocephaly still hold sway and that by synthesising the study of these three presidents we can better understand patterns and trends in the religion-politics relationship. This section examines the literature on religious politics in Ukraine and from this body of literature I argue that religion has a fluctuating influence in Ukrainian politics depending on the preferences of presidential candidates, i.e. the influence of religion is not static or fixed but malleable and easily manipulated depending on the needs of the administrations in place at different times. Rather than being mere observers to developments, the study of presidential speeches shows that presidents are actively involved in influencing

debates on the role of religion in Ukrainian politics and national identity and take a prominent role in informing the answers to those types of questions raised in Brubaker's theory.

The role of religion and religious politics in Ukraine should be examined within the context of wider Ukrainian-Russian relations and the continuation of medieval and early modern debates on Ukrainian autocephaly. The presidency of Petro Poroshenko from 2014-2019 marked a turning point in the political importance of the autocephaly issue, but the presence of religious discourse in politics was a prominent feature of Ukrainian public life before 2014. Andriy Yurash (2005) analysed the political role of the UOC-MP in the 2004 Yanukovich campaign to demonstrate the significant influence of religious organisations in Ukrainian politics, particularly an Orthodox organisation with the strength of the UOC-MP. Yurash argues that the social power of the UOC-MP was instrumental to Yanukovich's popularity, in exchange for which he endorsed their narrative and presented the election as a clash between two identities – one being anti-Slavic and serving to '...confirm the hegemony of Americans and foreigners...', and the other 'patriotic', i.e. pro-Russian (Yurash, 2005: 380).

The Poroshenko presidency marked the strongest intertwining between religion and nationalism as outlined in Brubaker's theory, and religion became central to answering those '...who are we' questions in the wake of the Revolution of Dignity (Shestopalets 2020, 2020a). The religious politics of the Poroshenko administration are perhaps the most interesting because of the contrast between Poroshenko and his predecessor Yanukovich. Whereas Yanukovich's courting of the UOC-MP during his 2004 presidential campaign and his 2010 presidency was based on paternalistic networks established during his time as governor of Donetsk (Yurash, 2005), Poroshenko's religious politics were formalised in Ukrainian law, reflecting the perceived importance of religion for the nation's security. Poroshenko's mission to develop religion into a central element of national security and social cohesion is therefore a key focus of the literature on his presidency, with significant attention paid to the laws introduced during his presidency, inspired by concerns about the social power of the UOC-MP (Petro, 2019; Shestopalets, 2020, 2020a). Nicolai Petro argues that this securitisation was the result of disquiet amongst Ukrainian nationalists who '...have long found it troubling that the majority of the country attends a church whose nominal head resides in Moscow' (04/04/19). Shestopalets agrees, arguing that the religious politics of the Yanukovich era was the primary target of Poroshenko's securitising laws, through which believers could be gently convinced to switch their affiliation (2020: 721).

The literature on Yanukovich and Poroshenko shows two different approaches to understanding the religious-political relationship in Ukraine, one focusing on personal contacts between the administration and the clergy, the other focusing on the legal securitisation of religion. Despite a lack of literature focusing on religion during the Zelenskyy presidency so far, it is clear that Zelenskyy's approach to religion in politics, and his understanding of the role of religion in Ukrainian national identity initially differed from his predecessors. Dmytro Vovk analysed early public statements from the Zelenskyy administration and concluded that, in contrast to his predecessor, '...Zelenskyy restricted himself to general phrases about state neutrality and respect for religious autonomy...' and that '...most ministers and members of parliament affiliated with the President are much less inclined to talk about religion in public life... seeming not to pay much attention to church state relations...' (09/01/20). This has certainly changed as the Zelenskyy administration reacted to events since 2019.

As already mentioned, while reviewing the literature for this thesis I noticed a lack of synthesis between the studies of individual presidencies, i.e. a lack of attention to what extent, if any, Yanukovich's religious policy influenced Poroshenko, whether Poroshenko influenced Zelenskyy etc. The literature available largely deals with events, legal developments and religious politics, but overall there is a lack of attention to process-tracing. Therefore this thesis aims to both examine the role of religion in the ideologies of three Ukrainian presidents but also aims to present a synthesised analysis of religious policy across administrations.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Research Design

Comparative Analysis and Process-Tracing of Three Ukrainian Presidents

I have chosen to examine the topic using two approaches. Firstly, I take a comparative perspective to analyse the similarities and differences between how the three presidents used religious discourse, rhetoric and ideas as part of their wider political ideologies. Secondly, the research incorporates process-tracing to examine the influences between presidents and how the use of religion by Yanukovich influenced Poroshenko's approach, who in turn influenced Zelenskyy. I decided to take this approach since most previous studies have focused only on individual Ukrainian presidents and a comparative perspective allows for a better understanding of how religious policy differs between presidencies and relates to the wider policies of different presidents.

The chronological scope of the study begins with the 2004 presidential election because, although he ultimately did not win the contest, Yanukovich's use of his religious connections was invaluable both at the time and later during his presidency from 2010 to 2014. I also chose to start with Yanukovich because his was the final presidency before the Revolution of Dignity and the start of Russia's invasion of Ukrainian territory with the annexation of Crimea. Religion became a significant issue in the wake of Euromaidan and was increasingly securitised as an issue of national security. Here we see an example of process-tracing in action; Yanukovich's courting of the UOC-MP and pro-Russian religious orientation inspired the securitising priorities of the Poroshenko presidency.

Research Methods

This thesis uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse the relationship between religion, politics and national identity in Ukraine. CDA is an especially useful method for analysing the role of religion in politics and national identity. Theresa Catalano and Linda R. Waugh argue that the objective of CDA '...is to examine critically the relationship between language, ideology, power and social structure...' and that since its emergence it has '...developed into a broadly based international program with a set of approaches that explores the relationships between discourse (language use) and the people who create and use it, and the social and political contexts, structures, and practices in which it occurs...' (2001: 1) The critical in CDA marks a development of discourse analysis (DA) from its original form. In the edited volume *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the*

Study of Religion (Stausberg & Engler, 2011), Titus Hjelm outlines the development of CDA by summarising the work of scholars such as Foucault, Fairclough, and van Dijk. In its most basic sense, according to Hjelm, ‘...discourse analysis examines how actions are given meaning and how identities are produced in language use...’ (2011: 134), whereas the critical element emphasises the importance of the role of ideology in relation to power. It is by analysing these ideologies we can better break down and understand what Fairclough defined as ‘...constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities)...’ (Fairclough, 1992: 87, quoted by Hjelm, 2011:141). Hjelm outlines the various approaches to discourse analysis before noting that CDA differs by its emphasis on ‘...power and ideology in discourse, and second, it acknowledges that there is a reality – physical and social – *outside* of discourse that is reproduced and changed discursively...’ (2011: 140). CDA is particularly useful for understanding how the role of religion in Ukrainian politics has changed under different presidents because it allows for critical analysis of the interplay between different phenomena, i.e. religion, politics, national identity and conflict.

James Paul Gee outlines how the study of discourse is vital to understanding the use of language in creating meaning and influencing listeners and readers. He argues that ‘when we speak or write we actively design our language to say and do what we want to or hope to’ (2014: 21). DA and CDA are again particularly useful to understanding the religious policies of Ukrainian presidents because they treat language as something actively designed to fit a preconceived ideological position; speakers are trying to convince listeners of the soundness of their position. Gee argues that to understand this use of language (discourse) in specific contexts, for specific purposes and for the fulfilment of an ideological goal, it is first necessary to understand that speakers/writers have two key roles to perform: Recipient Design and Position Design. To properly analyse a piece of discourse, in this case speeches, it is important to understand how speakers/writers perceive their audience (Recipient Design) and how they wish to influence and lead their audience (Position Design). Yanukovich, Poroshenko, and Zelenskyy have each taken different approaches to these designs in line with their wider political ideologies (Hjelm, 2011: 141).

In the *Routledge Handbook* Hjelm summarises the meaning of ideology in the work of various scholars, such as Thompson and Fairclough. Hjelm notes that ‘...for the critical tradition in social science, ideology is intimately tied with the question of power’ (2011: 141); an individual’s ideology will determine the way they exercise their power, the type of discourse they use, and how they wish to influence their audience - their position design (Gee, 2014:

21). It is therefore crucial to understand the ideological basis and motivation for statements concerning such contentious issues as religion, politics, and national identity. Hjelm writes about the idea of Hegemony or 'hegemonic discourse' in CDA, a state in which a singular 'construction of reality' (Fairclough, 1992) dominates and '...all alternative constructions are suppressed in favor of one dominating view' (Hjelm, 2011: 141). In Ukraine, this can be applied to the Yanukovich and Poroshenko presidencies, during both of which there was a top-down ideological push toward an approved and 'hegemonic' narrative of Ukrainian history, religion, and society. The early period of the Zelenskyy presidency seemed to indicate a departure from this top-down approach before the start of the 2022 invasion.

A proper understanding of differing 'constructions of reality' (Fairclough, 1992) is vital for the research questions of this thesis. If we are to properly understand how religion has been employed by Ukrainian politicians we must first understand their wider ideological and political goals. Hjelm argues that CDA is best suited to such a goal because it '...is interested in how variety is suppressed and hegemony produced' (2011: 142). He continues: '...critical discourse analysis provides a powerful method for analysing what is taken as 'common knowledge' or 'appropriate' in society and how these discursive constructions perpetuate particular ways of thinking and practice by suppressing alternative discourses...' (2011: 142). During the Yanukovich and Poroshenko presidencies there were great differences in what was considered 'common knowledge' and 'appropriate' in Ukrainian political and social life. CDA deconstructs these assumptions and allows for a more thorough examination of the motives and reasoning behind differing religious policies. Further, Hjelm argues that '...discourse analysis offers a rich and easily adaptable method for the study of religion...' because of the '...wealth of 'naturally-occurring' texts around us... websites, radio and television speeches, recordings of sermons, etc...' (2011: 145-146). Catalano and Waugh support this view by outlining the dimensions of CDA as defined as by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer. These dimensions include '...a focus on *larger units than isolated words and sentences*, and hence, new basic units of analysis: texts, discourses, conversations, speech acts, or communicative events... the extension of linguistics *beyond sentence grammar* towards a study of action and interaction... the study of the functions of (social, cultural, situative [situated] and cognitive) *contexts of language use*...' (2020: 3). CDA's suitability to examining complex issues and analysing a wide range of sources makes it the most useful methodology for exploring the crossover between religion and politics. My purpose in using CDA is therefore to analyse how differing 'constructions of reality' (Fairclough, 1992) and

position designs (Gee, 2014: 21) have influenced the religious policies of three Ukrainian presidents.

Sources and Research Limitations

The main criteria for selecting sources was mentions of religion within the source, except where the inclusion of a source was felt conducive to a better understanding of a presidency. To find older sources for the Yanukovich and Poroshenko presidencies, I have used Wayback Machine, a website which allows users to view older versions of websites, such as the website of the President of Ukraine. For the current presidency I used the existing version of the website of the President of Ukraine. Presidential speeches can also be found in various publications, such as newspapers and journals.

The research is limited by my lack of Ukrainian language, at which I am still in the beginner stage. However, thanks to a large amount of material being available in English on the President of Ukraine website, I was able to access speeches in full without encountering language barriers. My research was however limited by what was available online due to the inaccessibility of physical materials as a result of Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine. However I was still able to find a significant amount of material online and therefore feel able to draw conclusions on the basis of this material. When it comes to presidential speeches it is important to remember that these may not have been written by the presidents themselves and instead composed by their office. However it can be assumed that the presidents, by delivering the speeches, agree with the sentiments and arguments put forward in them.

Another notable limitation that must be mentioned is the difference in availability of materials for the Yanukovich presidency compared to those of Poroshenko and Zelenskyy. Whilst viewing older versions of the President of Ukraine website I noticed that for Yanukovich there is significantly less material in terms of speech transcripts. Instead, the website during his presidency reads more like a bulletin board with small updates about the president's movements. This is perhaps indicative of a difference in attitudes towards public communication between Yanukovich and his successors, as well as a product of developments in styles of political communication since 2014. The current administration is a strong example of a new type of political communication in the age of social media and there is therefore extensive source material for analysing the use of religious rhetoric by the Zelenskyy administration. As such, the analysis in the Yanukovich section is presented

differently from the latter two, with the analysis focusing on multiple sources in the same section to draw as many references to religion as possible, rather than the separate analysis of sources in the Poroshenko and Zelenskyy sections.

Chapter Four: Process Tracing and Developments in Religious Policy and Religious Politics Across Three Ukrainian Presidencies

The purpose of this section is to provide a background overview of the empirical cases and to trace the process through which Ukrainian religious policy has changed across administrations. This is done by examining how incumbents included religious discourse in their wider political programmes and how those questions posed by Brubaker were approached by the presidents. The section examines the three cases chronologically, providing the necessary context for the analysis of the collected sources in chapter five.

Viktor Fedorovych Yanukovych, 2010-2014

'I feel responsibility and humility... Before the Almighty, through Whom I will now assume the office of the President of Ukraine during such difficult times.' – Viktor Yanukovych

During the presidency of Viktor Fedorovych Yanukovych the order of the day can be broadly described as 'pro-Russian'. His decision to renege on an Association Agreement with the EU in favour of increasing ties with Russia led to the protests on Maidan Nezalezhnosti – Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity. Before his ousting an important aspect of Yanukovych's pro-Russian orientation was his 'New Religious Policy' (Shlikhta, 2016: 135). Briefly summarised, Yanukovych rejected the principals of religious tolerance and pluralism which Shlikhta argues more or less every Ukrainian president had adhered to since independence (2016: 135), and which are embedded in Article 35 of the Constitution. Yanukovych instead heavily favoured the UOC-MP, a church under the disputed jurisdiction of the ROC¹. Shlikhta summarised Yanukovych's policy as consisting '...of the intention to establish a 'State' Church based on the Russian model, a refusal to respect the principle of religious freedom... with a simultaneous demonstration of friendly relations with the Patriarch of Moscow' (2016: 135). For Yanukovych the answer to those '...who are we...' questions posed by Brubaker was found in closer ties with the Russian Federation and an emphasis on the apparently common origins of Ukraine and Russia in the medieval Kyivan state. Where his successors would stress the distinctiveness of Ukrainian identity and development,

¹ The UOC-MP's relationship with the ROC is a topic of extensive debate and has been complicated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Despite declaring de-facto independence from the ROC in May 2022, the UOC-MP is still technically dependent on the ROC.

Yanukovych saw Ukrainian identity as part of a wider Slavic identity shared with Russia, in which Orthodox Christianity was central.

The ramifications of Yanukovych's policy played a central role in the destabilisation of Ukraine towards the conclusion of his presidency, putting the President at odds with a multi-confessional society and the Constitution. His rigorous promotion of the ROC as a true 'Mother Church' for Ukrainian Orthodox Christians was a strong influence on future debates on the Church, such as President Poroshenko's securitisation of religion. Yanukovych's religious policy after 2010 was a result of the relationship he developed with the UOC-MP and ROC during his time as the governor of Donetsk Oblast and in the build-up to the 2004 presidential election. This section therefore starts with a brief summary of this relationship and how Yanukovych used church support throughout his political career. Although Yanukovych was ultimately unsuccessful in 2004, after allegations of electoral corruption led to the events of the Orange Revolution, his links with the UOC-MP did not disappear and remained influential after his election as President in 2010.

Characteristic of Yanukovych's administration was a failure to recognise the multi-confessional nuances of Ukrainian religious life. During the 2004 election campaign, Yanukovych and his team mistakenly assumed that the high level of Orthodox Ukrainians worshipping in UOC-MP affiliated parishes was indicative of strong support for a pro-Russian government in Kyiv. There is perhaps some justification for this assumption in the data on the numbers of UOC-MP organisations per oblast, compiled as part of a mapping project between March 2013 and March 2015. The data for 2014 compiled under the legend entry 'Ukraine 2014 statistics: Number of Orthodox Organisations of Moscow Patriarchate' shows that, even ten years after the Orange Revolution, the majority of Orthodox organisations across Ukraine were administered by the Moscow Patriarchate (Ukraine: Revolution of Dignity Project Data). However, the assumption that the members of these organisations would support a pro-Russian turn in the national orientation proved to be flawed, as was seen after Russia's annexation of the Crimea and the subsequent transfer of parishes to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP). Yurash argues that '...the Yanukovych team failed to take into account ethnic Ukrainian self-awareness; indeed, many doubted that it was of any significance or even that it existed at all...' (Yurash, 2005: 385); put simply, for Yanukovych there was no supposition that Ukrainians would put country before church. On questions of identity Yanukovych believed that his regional understandings of Ukrainian identity could be transferred to the national level. This is a useful starting point for tracing the process through

which Yanukovych's ideology would impact Poroshenko's approach. Yanukovych saw Russian and Ukrainian national identities as interchangeable because of religious similarities. Poroshenko, building on this, saw the need for a strong 'national' church as a bulwark of a distinct Ukrainian national identity.

The support of the UOC-MP was vital to Yanukovych's campaign in the 2004 election, which itself can be seen as a contest between Yanukovych as a religious candidate and Yushchenko as a secular candidate, with the UOC-MP portraying the latter as 'anti-Orthodox' (Yurash, 2005: 376). Yanukovych was able to employ the significant media power of the UOC-MP which dominated the religious press in Ukraine with '...95 of the 323 registered newspapers and journals on 1st January 2004...', with no other denomination coming close to this level (Yurash, 2005: 372). This significant influencing power was supplemented with the organisation of public demonstrations in favour of Yanukovych and the portrayal of a Yushchenko victory as an existential threat to Ukraine. Yurash notes that attacks against Yushchenko's liberalism took place even in the secular press, where Yanukovych was portrayed as a defender of Ukrainian values against Yushchenko (2005: 376). This culminated in an escalation of rhetoric through which Yanukovych's team, according to Yurash, '...began trying to implicate some key figures from the opposition electoral bloc... in the use of fascist symbols and slogans... they also started putting about the idea that an opposition victory would mean massive upheavals and even civil war...that it would lead to the influx of Catholic and Protestant religiosity hostile to real Slav Orthodoxy' (Yurash, 2005:380).

Yanukovych's preference for the UOC-MP widened regional and religious divisions in Ukrainian society, looking to the East and South for the majority of his support. Ivanov argues that to achieve this support Yanukovych '...in effect manipulated the deep cleavages in Ukrainian society – and did so successfully...' by playing on the fears of Russian speakers who saw Yushchenko as '...a nationalist who... will encroach on their linguistic and cultural identity, banish Russian from public life, sever ties with Russia...' (2004: 4-5). However, Marples argues that rather than viewing the election as a contest between pro-Western and pro-Russian candidates, it can be better understood as '...epitomised by Yushchenko's slogan that he would remove the 'bandits' from power and put an end to the deep corruption associated with the Kuchma presidency...' (2010-2011: 265). He argues further that Yanukovych was in a sense the oligarchs' candidate, put forward to protect their interests against the threat of a Yushchenko victory and was therefore able to rely on the massed resources of the oligarchs: 'Factories ordered workers to attend rallies on behalf of the prime minister (Yanukovych),

while traffic police, railway officials, and others were instructed to impede access of Yushchenko's supporters to the nation's capital' (2010-2011: 271). His role as Leonid Kuchma's Prime Minister allowed Yanukovych to '...deploy state money, property, and equipment for his election campaign and... state resources were also being applied to hinder his rivals' campaigns... From the outset the Yanukovych team was prepared to flout electoral procedures' (Marples, 2010-2011: 271). Despite Marples' argument against characterising the 2004 contest as an east versus west situation, he acknowledges that the theory of Ukraine as divided between pro-Western and pro-Russian halves is given credibility by '...the unusual role Russia played in the 2004 elections...' (Marples, 2010-2011: 278). Ivanov uses data from an electoral poll of 31st October 2004 showing that '...support for Yanukovych in western regions was in the low single digits, while Yushchenko garnered a meagre 2.94 percent in the Donetsk region, compared with 88 percent for Yanukovych' (2004: 5). The perception of Yanukovych as a pro-Russian candidate was strengthened by his visit to Moscow before the first round of the election, where, at a conference attended by Dmitry Medvedev, the Mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, '...endorsed Yanukovych as the only candidate capable of uniting Ukraine and maintaining good relations with Russia...' (Marples, 2010-2011: 273). This, followed by a *de facto* endorsement from Vladimir Putin, in combination with Yanukovych's loyalty to and partnership with the ROC through the UOC-MP, showed him to be an overtly pro-Russian candidate intent on mirroring the Church-State model of the Russian Federation rather than the secular multi-confessionalism of the Ukrainian constitution. It was this multi-confessionalism that Yurash argues was '...bound to provoke direct or indirect resistance from all the other churches...' and Yanukovych's overt favouring of one church above the others

'...exacerbated the differences between the Orthodox jurisdictions in Ukraine and between the wider Kiev-oriented and Moscow-oriented camps to such an extent that more than a decades-worth of efforts to minimise the potential for conflict amongst the main groupings within traditional Ukrainian Christianity and to move towards a consensual rather than one-sided conception of religious rapprochement were pretty well nullified' (Yurash, 2005: 376-377).

Throughout his 2004 campaign Yanukovych demonstrated that his understanding of Ukrainian national identity and the answers to Brubaker's questions involved close ties to the Kremlin and the ROC. In building positive relations with Russia, as part of a plan to present Ukraine as a bridge between East and West, Yanukovych's policy began a process through which religion would become securitised as an essential element of national security by Poroshenko. Religion

would be seen as one of those ‘fettters’ (31/08/18) to Russia to which Poroshenko would later refer and which, in presenting his own answers to Brubaker’s questions, he would work to undo.

While it is clear that there was strong religious involvement in the 2004 election, it would be erroneous to argue that Yanukovych alone possessed the support of religious leaders or that even the UOC-MP was unified in its vocal support for his campaign. In those Central and Western oblasts with UOC-MP parishes Mitrokhin argues that the representatives of these regions ‘...remained silent throughout the electoral campaign...’ and that even those who supported Yanukovych ‘...tried to minimise publicity...’ (2010: 242). He further argues that the Orange Revolution demonstrated ‘...the weak mobilisatory potential of the UOC-MP; it proved unable to provide its candidate with enough supporters at rallies or to create broad coalitions on the bases of its membership...’ (2010: 243). Furthermore, Yanukovych’s prioritisation of the UOC-MP had sufficiently alienated other Christians and non-Christians to drive support for Yushchenko: ‘Clergy were constantly in evidence: representatives of various confessions... delivered sermons and led pro-democracy prayers on city squares; buses brought in village priests and their parishioners who simply stood on Independence Square. The real support for Yushchenko amongst the religious community was obvious’ (Mitrokhin, 2010: 243).

Despite his loss in 2004, Yanukovych would reach the Presidency in 2010 until the collapse of his government four years later amid what Kudelia described as ‘...unprecedented internal polarisation and the worst state-sponsored violence against civilians that independent Ukraine had ever seen’ (2014: 19). Taras Kuzio argues that Yanukovych’s victory in 2010 marked a regression in Ukrainian politics and society with the return of a ‘...neo-Soviet generation...’ and an ‘...ideological shift to the fetishization of an authoritarian ‘vertical of power’... and nostalgia for Russia and the Soviet past...’ in contrast to the younger generation of Yushchenko’s presidency ‘...less tainted by Soviet rule and the Brezhnev era...’ (2010: 1-2). In the time between the 2004 and 2010 elections there is some evidence to suggest that the UOC-MP as a whole reformed its attitude towards the Ukrainian religious sphere, especially after Yanukovych’s departure as Prime Minister under Yushchenko, from which time, as Mitrokhin argues, ‘...the UOC-MP started slowly drifting towards greater autonomy with less regard for Moscow-based religious politics...’ (2010: 244). Senior clerics in the UOC-MP began distancing themselves from the divisive rhetoric of the early 2000s and sought better relations with other Ukrainian Christians, especially the UOC-KP. Regardless of this,

Yanukovych retained the pro-Russian political and religious positions he advocated in 2004. From the outset of his presidency Yanukovych made clear that the legal equality of all religions guaranteed by the 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations would be up for revision. Shlikhta notes that Yanukovych set the tone for his presidency by only inviting representatives of the UOC-MP to his inauguration, something which ‘...remained characteristic of all national celebrations under his Presidency...’ and in contrast to earlier presidents who, by inviting representatives of all confessions had practiced the ‘...symbolically important recognition by the state of the role of religion and the churches and of religious pluralism and tolerance as a Ukrainian characteristic feature...’ (Shlikhta, 2016: 134). In his assessment of the first 100 days of Yanukovych’s presidency, Kuzio argues that any optimism that Yanukovych and the Party of Regions (PoR) would unite a divided country was misguided:

‘In his first months in office, Yanukovych has shown that he is more than ready to implement pro-Russian rhetoric in both the domestic and foreign domains. These include the re-writing of school textbooks, Soviet tirades against ‘Ukrainian nationalism’, preference for the monopolisation of religious life by the Russian Orthodox Church, servility for Russian policies in the CIS and support for reuniting major areas of the Ukrainian and Russian economies’ (Kuzio, 2010: 4).

Yanukovych’s presidency began to unravel in late December 2013, after his decision to renege on an association agreement with the EU. As the protests escalated and the government’s response became increasingly violent a split emerged within the UOC-MP on the question of who the Church should support, the President or the protestors. Shlikhta notes that other confessions, such as the UOC-KP and the UGCC, ‘...supported the revolution from its very beginning and became key actors...’, in the highly visible religious presence on *Nezalezhnosti*:

‘Ecumenical religious services were continually conducted both from the stage of the Maidan and in the ‘prayer tent’... numerous confessions partaking in Holy Communion... and daily sermons were all features of everyday Maidan life for over three months’ (Shlikhta, 2016: 137).

The UOC-MP found itself divided between loyalty to its ‘Mother Church’ in Russia and Yanukovych on the one hand and loyalty to the Ukrainian people on the other. Those confessions which supported the protestors formed the basis for a new model of Church-State relations in Ukraine, in which the churches became important actors in Ukrainian civil society and defenders of the rights of Ukrainians to protest against government. Yanukovych’s

favouritism towards the UOC-MP as part of his wider pro-Russian policy greatly influenced the approach of his successor towards questions of church-state relations.

Yanukovych's presidency is a credible starting point for tracing the process through which religious politics and the relationship between religion and national identity have developed in Ukraine. When confronting those questions of '...who are we...' and '...what is distinctive about us...' Yanukovych chose to emphasise the supposed common history and origins of the Ukrainian and Russian nations, what Poroshenko would later call 'fetters' (31/08/18). Yanukovych's administration therefore marks the beginning of a process in which, following his ousting, religion would be securitised as a matter of national security and links to Russia would be broken; without Yanukovych, Poroshenko's policy would not have developed as it did.

Petro Oleksiyovych Poroshenko, 2014-2019

'Autocephaly is an issue of our independence. This is an issue of our national security.' –
Petro Poroshenko

Coming directly after the Revolution of Dignity, the presidency of Petro Poroshenko marked a significant departure from the pro-Russian politics of his predecessor and was dominated by questions of autocephaly and securitisation of religion. The significance of the Revolution of Dignity and Russia's annexation of Ukrainian territory for Poroshenko's religious policy must not be underestimated; as Shestopalets argues, the so-called Ukraine crisis '...brought to the fore the issue of the division in Ukrainian Orthodoxy and also substantially contributed to deep changes in the policies on religion pursued by the new post-Euromaidan political regime' (2020: 713). The Poroshenko presidency was thus marked by an '...unprecedentedly high level of intertwining between religion and politics in the public sphere...' and efforts to establish '...an ideological paradigm which features a close binding of religion and nationalism' (Shestopalets, 2020a: 150). To this end a key goal of the Poroshenko administration was the establishment of an autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine with its administrative centre in Ukraine, in contrast to the UOC-MP which, as Shestopalets argues, has been viewed as '...a 'Moscow Church' or an 'FSB Church' – a subversive political organisation managed by the Russian secret services... and existing in Ukraine only for the purposes of serving the interests of the Russian state' (2020: 719). Hudson disagrees with this interpretation, arguing that to categorise it as a 'tool' of Moscow is '...incongruent with the broad powers of autonomy in crucial aspects of church governance enjoyed by the UOC-MP...' and that it is important to

remember that the UOC-MP is an internally ideologically divided church between ‘...those clergy and laity who wished the canonical church to become a genuinely Ukrainian institution, and those who wished the UOC-MP to remain symbolically and politically close to Moscow’ (2018: 1359,1376). Regardless, the religious policy of the Poroshenko administration can best be characterised as ‘nationalist’, with a blurring of the dividing lines between Church and State outlined by Article 35 of the Constitution. However, as Shestopalets notes, Poroshenko’s religious policy differed from his predecessor’s in that Poroshenko did not want an autocephalous national church at the expense of religious freedom, but saw autocephaly as a necessity for national security while emphasising that this would not become a ‘State Church’ along the Russian model (Shestopalets, 2020a: 155). For Poroshenko religion was crucial to addressing Brubaker’s questions. As will be seen below, Poroshenko approached the issue of ‘...who are we...’ and ‘...what is distinctive about us...’ with an emphasis on the historical continuity of Ukrainian Christianity as unique from Russia and the ROC. This approach began the process through which Zelenskyy would address these questions after 2019.

By presenting religious issues as inseparably tied to matters of national security, Poroshenko was able to use the power and legitimacy of the state to guide religious developments and the creation of a new church was high on the agenda. Petro (04/04/19) argues Poroshenko’s early presidency was influenced by a report from two senior analysts at the National Institute for Strategic Research, Sergei Zdioruk and Vladimir Tokman, who recommended the passing of two draft laws and a nine-point plan for religious policy to Poroshenko. Draft law 4128 concerned the transfer of parishes between church jurisdictions while, 4511 would have massively extended state control over the religious sphere by requiring that ‘...all religious charters explicitly endorse the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and laws of Ukraine. Candidates for the leadership of religious organisations would require state approval...’ (04/04/19). Neither of these laws were passed and were dismissed by critics as too invasive and at odds with the Constitution. The nine-point plan recommended by Zdioruk and Tokman featured such recommendations as ‘The Ukrainian Parliament should adopt draft law No.1244... and rename the UOC-MP the ‘Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine’; ‘The government should begin a discussion on rescinding the property rights of the UOC-MP in all key national shrines’; ‘The government should prevent hierarchs of the UOC-MP from taking part in any public celebrations’; and, most importantly, ‘...the government should develop a comprehensive and mutually reinforcing set of initiatives aimed at establishing a local Ukrainian Orthodox Church’ (04/04/19). This final recommendation became the dominant

religious goal of Poroshenko's presidency and a key focus of the sources collected for this thesis.

The securing of a Tomos of Autocephaly from the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople marked the zenith of the intertwining of religion and politics under Poroshenko. Petro sees this push for autocephaly as an integral part of Poroshenko's bid for re-election in 2019 which required the support of the Western and Central oblasts and '...a decidedly more nationalistic agenda, of which autocephaly from Moscow has long been a major part...' (04/04/19). The push for recognition of autocephaly from Constantinople occurred alongside an increasing distrust of the UOC-MP from both political elites and religious groups, culminating in the passing of Bill No.5309 on 20th December 2018 as an addendum to the law 'On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations'. The bill required those religious organisations whose administrative centre was in a country recognised as an aggressor state by the Ukrainian government to indicate this status in their name. It is important to note that the -MP in UOC-MP is often not used by those belonging to it, but to distinguish it from other Orthodox churches and which Shestopalets argues reflects '...the inherent ambiguity in the UOC-MP's religious status, which required performing a constant balancing act between the necessity of proving its institutional autonomy and its unyielding determination to stay united with the ROC' (2020: 719). The bill was a fundamental part of Poroshenko's securitisation of religion and was designed to '...label certain confessional structures as potential security risks – a measure alerting believers to the fact that their religious organisation was linked to an enemy and thus, de facto, pushing them to join other religious organisations' (Shestopalets, 2020: 721).

In the later stages of his presidency Poroshenko increasingly linked Ukrainian autocephaly, national identity, sovereignty, and the survival of the state, reflecting this in his 2019 campaign slogan '*Armiia, Mova, Vira*' (Army, Language, Faith). Significant as Poroshenko's influence for securing the Tomos was, the UOC-MP remained powerful in Ukraine in terms of numbers. Karelska and Umland view the acquisition of the Tomos as '...the result of a decades long struggle of many Ukrainian Christians against the dominance of the UOC-MP and of aspirations of many Orthodox believers in Ukraine', rather than merely the result of diplomacy by Poroshenko's administration (03/02/20). However, this interpretation of the Tomos clashes with the quantitative data available for the size of the UOC-MP across Ukraine four years into Poroshenko's presidency, showing that by the end of 2018 '...at least two-thirds of the 18,000 Orthodox Christian parishes in Ukraine still swore allegiance to the UOC-MP' (Petro, 04/04/19). Although the Tomos may have brought together those Orthodox churches which

Petro argues had ‘co-existed in tense, mutual non-recognition’ (04/04/19) since 1992 – the UOC-KP, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), and some elements of the UOC-MP – the passing of the Tomos did not eliminate the significant social influence of the Russian-linked church overnight. It did however mark an escalation of religious tensions between the nascent OCU and the state on the one hand and the UOC-MP on the other. By December 2018, the Verkhovna Rada was pushing Bill No.5309 against the UOC-MP and demanding that its name be changed to the ‘Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine’. The relationship between religion and state was a dominant theme of Poroshenko’s presidency until his loss to Zelenskyy at the 2019 election.

The Poroshenko presidency is indispensable for tracing the processes of developments in religious policies following Yanukovich. Poroshenko’s approach marked the beginning of undoing those ‘fetters’ (31/08/18) which tied Ukraine to Russia and the formulation of those answers to Brubaker’s questions that would carry over to the Zelenskyy presidency.

Volodymyr Oleksandrovykh Zelenskyy, 2019 – Present

‘All my life I tried to do all I could so that Ukrainians laughed. That was my mission. Now I will do all I can so that Ukrainians at least do not cry anymore.’ – Volodymyr Zelenskyy

The 2019 election was contested between Petro Poroshenko and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the former a well-established businessman and politician, the latter a comedian and television entertainer who had portrayed a fictional president of Ukraine in the TV series ‘Servant of the People’; this would later be used as the name of his political party. During the election the two took significantly different approaches, with, as mentioned above, Poroshenko appealing to nationalist sentiment with his ‘Army, Language, Faith’ campaign slogan and repeated endorsement of the OCU as a counterweight to the social influence of the UOC-MP. It was inevitable that religion would play a part in the election; as Vovk argues: ‘...church-state relations have culminated in religion becoming an inalienable part of state policies and public discourse on national security’ (09/01/20). By the 2019 election religion was integral to answering questions of identity as outlined in Brubaker’s theory. In comparison to Poroshenko, Zelenskyy’s campaign appears almost secular. As Vovk notes, Zelenskyy ‘...restricted himself to general phrases about state neutrality and respect for religious autonomy...’ and Zelenskyy’s team as President are ‘...much less inclined to talk about religion in public and to be publicly involved in religious life, seeming not to pay much attention to church-state relations...’ (09/01/20). The place of religion in the politics of the Zelenskyy administration has however moved with events and has been especially influenced by increased Russian belligerence against Ukraine culminating in the full-scale invasion of February 2022. The invasion has been pivotal in the development of Zelenskyy’s religious policy and the influence of religion on Ukrainian national identity. Under Zelenskyy, those questions of ‘...what is distinctive about us...’ have been met with invocations of Ukraine’s historical sovereignty and Christianity, with a unique national identity indisputably separate from Russia.

This section will outline how religion has featured in the Zelenskyy administration up to the present, with the most recent significant development being a proposal by the President directly targeted at the UOC-MP, ‘...making it impossible for religious organisations affiliated with centers of influence in the Russian Federation to operate in Ukraine’ (2/12/22). Despite the seemingly secular start to Zelenskyy’s administration the President has reacted to events. As Vovk noted early on in the administration: ‘...political losses and/or geopolitical challenges might push Volodymyr Zelensky to accept a tighter and more intrusive model of church-state

relations, even to interfere in the inter-Orthodox conflict, just as every president of Ukraine has done before...' (09/01/20). Since the start of the invasion Zelenskyy has pursued a securitising policy building on the earlier work of Poroshenko. Here we can clearly trace a process of religious securitisation between Poroshenko and Zelenskyy.

The early days of Zelenskyy's administration saw a rapid departure from the nationalist and securitising agenda of the Poroshenko administration and a greater emphasis on state neutrality in the religious sphere, including towards the newly-formed OCU. Sysyn goes so far as to argue that Zelenskyy's apparent neutrality in the early days of his administration and the removal of support for the newly-formed Orthodox Church of Ukraine benefited the UOC-MP by withdrawing the pressure placed on the latter by Poroshenko (2020: 519). It is however beyond doubt that at his election Zelenskyy had an unprecedented mandate from the Ukrainian electorate for whom he seemed to embody the principles and aspirations of the Revolution of Dignity. Writing just after the election, Rohozinska and Shpak argue that Zelensky was '...propelled to victory by deep distrust of the political elite, disappointment over what voters see as unfulfilled promises, and emotional exhaustion with the ongoing war and economic hardship', but that he was also the typical Ukrainian political candidate in that his campaign lacked any real, concrete policy suggestions (2019: 42,45). Questions of religion had a prominent role in Poroshenko's campaign, whose acquisition of the Tomos ultimately failed to bolster his low level of public support. Rohozinska and Shpak argue that towards the end of his presidency Poroshenko's blurring of the lines between the Church and State, such as his Tomos Tour with the document of autocephaly drew criticism and '...confused voters as to the role of the presidency' (2019: 37). It is however important to note that Poroshenko's presidency was significant in that as President he oversaw the development of a new era of Ukrainian politics. Rohozinska and Shpak further argue that under Poroshenko '...Ukraine has made greater progress in shedding the vestiges of its communist past than it had achieved in the years since gaining independence in 1991... Nonetheless, the pace and depth of reform have been disappointing to many...'; it was this disappointment that boosted support for Zelensky (2019: 34).

Religious issues have been highly important for the Zelenskyy administration since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion and at the heart of questions of national identity and sovereignty, despite Zelenskyy's initial secularism. Vovk noted that where earlier presidents publicly engaged in religious ceremonies, Zelenskyy took a different approach, not participating in, for example, '...the annual celebration of the Day of Baptizing Rus, the National Prayer Breakfast

in May 2019, or the celebration of the first anniversary of the OCU in December 2019' (09/01/20). Zelenskyy's initial approach to religion in Ukraine abandoned the securitising rhetoric of the Poroshenko era and instead looked to the social power of religious institutions and how this could be used to the benefit of the country, such as his meeting with religious leaders in December 2019 in which he asked for their support to ending the war in Donbass. Despite the change in tactics from the previous administration the question of the UOC-MP and its relationship with the ROC remained pertinent. Vovk argued that Zelenskyy's initial commitment to religious neutrality would become difficult when presented with the issue of the UOC-MP and the presence of pro-Russian individuals and sentiments within the church; the choice would then be between a commitment to religious neutrality or a return to the securitising measures of the previous administration. Zelenskyy's religious neutrality was a reflection of his commitment to seeking a peaceful solution to the war in Donbass and, as Vovk notes, '...geopolitical challenges might push Volodymyr Zelensky to accept a tighter and more intrusive model of church-state relations, even to interfere in the inter-Orthodox conflict, just as every president of Ukraine has done before' (09/01/20).

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 proved to be the kind of geopolitical shift that would alter the President's stance on religion in political life. Religion is a highly visible element in Russia's invasion of Ukraine and in the Ukrainian government's response to the full-scale invasion, to the extent that Leustean has described the invasion as 'the first religious war in the 21st century' (03/03/22). Since the start of the war Zelenskyy has invoked his own religious heritage to appeal for support from the global Jewish community, an appeal which Eisner, writing in *Religion and Politics*, says '...has been embraced with a kind of familial hug as a charismatic symbol of resolve and courage' (22/03/22). The war has further complicated the religious situation with the UOC-MP and pushed Zelenskyy to take the hard-line approach predicted by Vovk (09/01/20). Through its association with the ROC and the Kremlin, the UOC-MP is seen as a dangerous foreign agent acting in the interests of an enemy state and following the theology of Putin loyalists, most notably Patriarch Kirill, a virulent supporter of the Russian government and the invasion. The UOC-MP still holds considerable power in Ukraine, with more than 12,000 parishes and a significant presence in the life of Orthodox Ukrainians, albeit a presence undermined by the war as parishes abandon it in favour of the OCU (Karelska & Umland, 23/06/22). The strongest consequence of the war for the UOC-MP has been Zelenskyy's proposal to curtail the operation of religious organisations controlled from or influenced by Russia, something that Zelenskyy called a guarantee for Ukraine's

‘spiritual independence’ (01/12/22). The religious policy of the Zelenskyy administration has therefore developed alongside geopolitical changes and the President’s early attempts at neutrality, reconciliation and cooperation were undone by events. Zelenskyy’s answers to Brubaker’s identity questions, particularly ‘...what is distinctive about us...’, heavily emphasise the role of religion in the formation of Ukrainian identity and the link religion provides between modern Ukraine and Kyivan Rus’, demonstrating the legitimacy and historicity of an independent Ukrainian state and identity. The section analysing Zelenskyy’s speeches explores this in more detail.

Tracing the process of development of religious politics in Ukraine from Yanukovych to Zelenskyy demonstrates the influence of religion on questions of identity. The policies of the Poroshenko and Zelenskyy administrations were directly influenced by the Yanukovych administration’s relationship with the Russian government and preference for the UOC-MP/ROC. The Poroshenko administration carried out a significant upheaval of Ukrainian religious politics, putting religion at the very centre of sovereignty and identity. Whilst Zelenskyy departed from this approach in the early days of his Presidency, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia has resumed the process started by Poroshenko in which religion has become a matter of national security and an integral part of Ukrainian national identity, essential to address those questions posed by Brubaker.

Chapter Five: Religious Rhetoric in Ukrainian Presidents' Political Speeches

In this section I use the CDA methods outlined in chapter three to analyse political speeches for each of the presidents. Each sub-section focuses on the use of religious rhetoric, references to religion, or invocations of religion by the presidents, through which the research questions are addressed. I also present comparative and process-tracing analysis outlined in chapter three to show how Brubaker's identity questions and theory of religion as intertwined with nationalism is relevant to the study and development of religious politics. While this section will focus on the religious elements in the sources, it is important to remember that in Ukrainian politics there is often crossover between religion, language, and national identity, and as such the sections will cover those themes that are relevant to the political use of religion. Each section starts with an analysis of the inaugural speech of the relevant president. While these may not contain explicit references to religion, they are useful for understanding the role of religion in the policies of the respective administrations.

Yanukovich

In this chapter I treat the Yanukovich presidency at the starting point for the process-tracing I use throughout the analysis. Yanukovich's presidency, his ideology and his administration's collapse had a significant impact on the two succeeding administrations, especially the securitising agenda of the Poroshenko administration. During the research for this section I noticed that, compared to his successors, there is significantly less material for the Yanukovich presidency. Reflecting this, the following analysis of religious rhetoric in Yanukovich's public speeches focuses on excerpts from several speeches, rather than analysis of individual examples, however it does include his inaugural address and speech at the anniversary of Kyivan Christianisation.

Viktor Yanukovich's Inaugural Address, February 2010

Delivered to the Verkhovna Rada in February 2010 after his victory, Viktor Yanukovich's inaugural address contains explicit references to religion. His address was delivered in a drastically different climate from his successors before the War in Donbas and the annexation of Crimea. Yanukovich came to the Presidency in 2010, six years after his 2004 victory was

overturned by the Orange Revolution. Yanukovich began his speech with an allusion to 2004 to dispel any ideas of corruption playing a part in his eventual victory:

The elections are over. The whole world has recognised that they were democratic. The Ukrainian nation has spoken, and the international community has reaffirmed that Ukraine is a free state... where the people's choice cannot be questioned by any manifestations of someone's ill will. (25/02/10)

His first explicitly religious reference in the address is when he appears to attribute his election victory to God, toward whom he now owes a responsibility to work towards good governance:

I feel responsibility and humility... Before the Almighty, through Whom I will now assume the office of the President of Ukraine during such difficult times. (25/02/10)

Though it may seem insignificant, the few references to religion in this speech differentiate Yanukovich from his successors. The central message in the address is that Ukraine must become what Yanukovich summarises as transparent, effective and accountable with harmony between the President and the Verkhovna Rada. He sees political divides as the biggest obstacle to achieving these goals and, quoting the Bible, argues that religious differences, amplified by socio-economic discontent, destabilise the state and the work of government:

Says the Bible: 'Make your peace with your adversary quickly, while you are still on the road with him...' Life has confirmed this simple truth: people don't like being shown bare fists... People tend to politicise certain issues of spirituality mostly when they are in a state of permanent financial instability. In economically developed nations, the probability of internal conflicts due to the differences in cultural traditions... is 10 times lower than in economically backward states. (25/02/10)

Yanukovich's 'position design' (Gee, 2014; 21) here is to present Ukraine as a backward and divided nation which only he as President can salvage. His inaugural speech gives little indication of how his Presidency would develop and unravel in 2013-2014. Yanukovich envisages Ukraine as a bridge between Russia and the West, a policy which would ultimately break down in favour of Russia, culminating in his self-imposed exile after the Revolution of Dignity.

Yanukovich's inaugural address is distinct from his successors because he combines religious and political reformist rhetoric and concludes with an appeal to religion:

Let God help us in this righteous aspiration! (25/02/10)

His speech does little to show the pro-Russian attitudes he displayed during the 2004 election. Throughout the course of his presidency Yanukovich pursued warmer relations with Russia, and his preference for the UOC-MP, a hangover from his time as Governor of Donetsk, became increasingly visible.

Unity Through Orthodoxy: Speech at the 1025th Anniversary of Volodymyr the Great's Conversion to Christianity & Religious Rhetoric Throughout the Presidency

Yanukovich's address at the 1025th anniversary of the Christianisation of Kyivan-Rus' is key to analysing his understanding of the role of religion in Ukrainian national identity. In stark contrast to his successors, Vladimir Putin was invited and even addressed the attendees, emphasising the links between Ukraine and Russia.

Yanukovich's remarks on the anniversary of Christianisation were delivered in the midst of efforts to build relations with Putin's Russia; the anniversary provided an opportunity for the two Presidents to introduce a spiritual element into their relationship. As will be seen below, Yanukovich's successors used the longevity of Christianity in Ukraine as an inseparable link to Kyivan Rus' and undeniable proof that the modern Ukrainian state was the legitimate successor to the medieval state. Yanukovich, however, chose instead to emphasise the importance of Kyivan Rus' for both countries and the importance of Christianity for Russian-Ukrainian unity:

I am grateful to you personally, Vladimir Vladimirovich, for your coming to Ukraine today with such a team and jointly with us to celebrate this wonderful holiday of the unity of our peoples. (27/03/13)

Yanukovich's appearance at the anniversary proceedings feels shallow and designed purely to further negotiations with Putin's government. In fact, compared to his successors, Yanukovich largely neglects the religious aspect of the occasion in favour of bureaucratic language designed to further his relations with Russia:

'I am convinced that we have many mutual interests and issues... which may create conditions for development of our economies and mutual cooperation in the whole range of sectors. (27/03/13)

Unlike Yanukovich, Putin makes the most of the occasion to pontificate on:

...our common great holiday, which reminds us about a spiritual unity, speaks about our common roots, reminds us that jointly we have done much over the previous centuries, and that we have jointly reached outstanding... results in the arrangement of our society, which was common at that time. (Putin, 27/07/13)

Speaking six months later in his brief Orthodox Christmas address to the Ukrainian people Yanukovich gives some mention of the importance of religion for Ukrainian political development and national identity:

Today our large family – Ukrainian people – asks God to strengthen us in faith and unity to build a happy and prosperous country... Christianisation has contributed to the spiritual development of Ukrainian people. It has become a basis for the formation of our unity and statehood. (06/01/14)

Considering the connections between Yanukovich and the UOC-MP/ROC during his time as Governor of Donetsk and in 2004 it is surprising that during his presidency he paid relatively little attention to religion. This does not mean however that religion was not politicised under Yanukovich. The above excerpts demonstrate that religion was utilised by the Yanukovich administration as a means to end, i.e. developing relations with Russia and to emphasise the historicity of Ukraine's relations with Russia, a relationship portrayed as natural and which came under attack in the previous Yushchenko administration.

From a surface-level analysis of his religious remarks as President, Yanukovich appears as a secularising liberal. He speaks at length about the need to ensure religious equality and the need to maintain the separation of Church and State:

I will make every effort to guarantee equal rights and conditions for all confessions. I also guarantee an unbiased attitude of the government to all believers of all churches and religious organisations. (17/10/12)

It is the authority of church and it must be above policy. It must be the apex which people are striving to reach whole-heartedly. (17/10/12)

A brief analysis of Yanukovich's use of religious connections in 2004 and his relationship with the UOC-MP/ROC built up during his Governorship and presidential run show the insincerity with which he addresses religious issues. As a part of his diplomacy with Russia, Yanukovich ensured that his links with the UOC-MP/ROC were clearly visible. In a highly symbolic meeting with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', a key Putin ally up to the

present, Yanukovych was awarded the Order of St Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles for what Kirill described as ‘...the attention to labors to strengthen Orthodoxy in Ukraine...’. (23.07.10)

Summarising the Role of Religious Rhetoric in the Yanukovych Presidency

Perhaps the most important thing to note about the Yanukovych Presidency is that it acted as the catalyst for the events which have defined Ukraine since his flight into exile: the War in Donbas, the annexation of Crimea, and more recently the full-scale invasion. The order of the day during his presidency was to nurture positive relations with Russia as part of a compromising policy between East and West. His continued courting of the UOC-MP and the ROC as President and his emphasis on the shared ancestral links between Russia and Ukraine, culminating in his renegeing on the EU Association Agreement, directly inspired the securitisation of religion by his successor, Petro Poroshenko. For Yanukovych, the answer to those questions posed by Brubaker lies with Russia, with which Ukrainian identity is historically and inseparably intertwined.

Poroshenko

Following Yanukovych, Petro Poroshenko came to the Presidency at the start of a new era in Ukrainian politics following Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity. The transition from Yanukovych to Poroshenko provides a strong example of how process-tracing allows for a better understanding of how incumbents are influenced by their predecessors. From a comparative perspective, Poroshenko’s religious politics were a reaction to the Yanukovych administration and presented a radically different understanding of Ukrainian national identity. The sources analysed below show that throughout his Presidency, Poroshenko put religion at the very centre of ideas on Ukrainian sovereignty and questions of identity such as those proposed by Brubaker.

Petro Poroshenko’s Inaugural Address, June 2014

In his inaugural address delivered to the Verkhovna Rada in June 2014, four months after Yanukovych began his self-imposed exile in Russia, Petro Poroshenko gave little hint as to the securitising religious agenda his administration would later pursue. The timing of the speech is key to understanding Poroshenko’s position design (Gee, 2014: 21). Poroshenko addressed the Ukrainian parliament in the wake of Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity, the

beginning of the war in Donbas following the declaration of independence by Russian-backed separatists in Luhansk (LPR) and Donetsk (DPR), and Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. Against this backdrop Poroshenko emphasised Ukrainian unity, peace, and the opportunities created by the Revolution of Dignity for a return-to-Europe:

We, Ukrainians, 'are a living spark in the family of European nations and active members of European civilisational work'. These are the words of Ivan Franko²...

The return of Ukraine to its natural, European state has been long-awaited by many generations... The time of inevitable positive changes has come. To implement them, we need first of all peace, security and unity. (07/06/14)

Here we see an early attempt by Poroshenko to outline his understanding of Ukrainian national identity and to address Brubaker's identity questions. Whereas Yanukovich had advocated a compromise position between East and West, Poroshenko is unequivocally placing Ukraine in Europe.

Poroshenko's opening line is designed to emphasise this message of Ukrainian unity from the very beginning of his presidency; he begins with 'Dear Compatriots from Lviv to Donetsk, from Chernihiv to Sevastopol!' (07/06/14). Here Poroshenko's position design (Gee, 2014: 21) in naming a city from each part of Ukraine – north, south, east, and west – including one in occupied territory and another under rebel control, is to tell the Rada what his understanding of Ukrainian national identity is. Poroshenko's address is a manifesto built on the promises and opportunities of the Revolution of Dignity and although it is lacking in reference to the divine or the religious situation in 2014, it is useful for contextualising how Poroshenko would later use religion to build on the ideas outlined in the address. Poroshenko's emphasis on strong national security as a prerequisite for strong national identity and unity, a theme present throughout his presidency, was given ample attention in his inaugural address. Paradoxically Poroshenko promises decentralisation, but there is an important reason for this. In promising decentralising reforms and the guarantee of free usage of the Russian language, Poroshenko is stripping away the opportunities for a revival of Yanukovich's Party of Regions (PoR) by destroying the myth of Ukraine as a Kyiv-centric regime with a callous disregard for the Donbas and Russian-speaking Ukrainians. He argues instead that there is no contradiction between national unity and strong local government and that there needn't be a conflict

² Ukrainian poet and writer, 1856-1916

between a person's local identity and their national identity, but with a caveat that there can be no expectation of a Federal system:

Ukraine was, is, and will be a unitary state. Illusions of federation are ungrounded in Ukraine. (07/06/14)

This first speech gives few hints of the later hegemonic approach that Poroshenko would adopt. In the early days of the War in Donbas and the annexation of Crimea the priority of the post-Maidan government was to keep the country together and fulfil the expectations of those who spent the winter of 2013-2014 on Nezalezhnosti. Thus Poroshenko's speech is heavy with the language of reform, unity, peace, but also defiance, symbolised by a commitment to European integration, anti-corruption and building distance from Russia. Poroshenko depicts Ukraine as an historical state which was purposely disrupted in its organic course of development by alien interests and which is now returning to its natural state:

We are a people that was torn away from its big Motherland – Europe – and we are returning to it. Finally and irreversibly. (07/06/14)

I have chosen to include this speech in the analysis because it focuses on those issues which Poroshenko would later incorporate religion into such as state security, national unity, and identity. Like his successor Zelenskyy, Poroshenko began his presidency with a mixed-approach of civic unity and defiance; both adopted an uncompromising dedication to Ukrainian sovereignty and independence.

What then is Poroshenko trying to convey to his audience and the nation? What is Poroshenko's position design (Gee, 2014: 21) aiming at? From the get-go, Poroshenko is building on the ambitions of the Revolution of Dignity, particularly what he identifies as '...the colossal opportunities for European modernisation...' (07/06/14). He seeks to build a sense of continuity in Ukrainian history by arguing that:

Entire generations of Ukrainian patriots fought for our independence, our freedom. The heroes of the Heaven's Hundred³ fell for it. Ukrainian soldiers and peaceful civilians are dying for it. (07/06/14)

Most importantly Poroshenko's message is one of Ukrainian unity and a depiction of the country not of one undermined by externally-supported rebels or territorial occupations, but of

³An honorific used for those participants of Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity who were killed by Yanukovich's security forces.

a nation both historic and modern on the return to Europe, one which is tolerant of the differences between its citizens, such as language. At a key moment in the speech, Poroshenko switches from Ukrainian to Russian to directly address Russian speakers in the Donbas, another attempt to dispel myths set by Kremlin propagandists. He begins:

Our dear brothers and sisters, our compatriots! (07/06/14)

Here he begins to unpick the mindset fostered by elites in the Donbas such as Yanukovych, a presentation of the region as incompatible with and persecuted by the rest of Ukraine:

The national elections of the President have put a complete stop to the myth of the so-called illegitimate Kyiv government. This myth was planned and grown by Russian propaganda and Yanukovych's clan, which betrayed Donbas and stole more from it than the entire country. They exclusively ruled Donetsk Oblast for 17 years. And now they are financing terrorists. It is them who are totally responsible for the political and socio-economical situation which the region has ended up in. For unemployment, poverty and the refugees. And for the murdered civilians, and the tears of the mothers. (07/06/14)

Poroshenko's inaugural address in many ways set the tone for the remainder of his Presidency. In setting out his immediate agenda Poroshenko proposed a new idea of Ukrainian national identity in the wake of Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity. In addressing Brubaker's '...who are we...' question, Poroshenko presents Ukraine as a historically European nation driven from its natural course by Russian and Soviet interference, a course to which it started to return with the Revolution of Dignity. In stark contrast to the divisions fostered by Yanukovych, Poroshenko presented an idea of a unified nation that could properly pursue the opportunities fostered by the democratic revolution. However, it is important to note that this address was delivered in the early days of the War in Donbas and just after the annexation of Crimea. As events developed so too did Poroshenko's ideology; it was during this period that religion became a key aspect of Ukrainian government policy and ideas of sovereignty and identity.

Poroshenko and the Tomos of Autocephaly: Speech at the 1030th Anniversary of Volodymyr the Great's Conversion to Christianity

The year 2018 is arguably the most important for understanding the role of religion in the Poroshenko administration. As the President used his office to work towards the creation of a

national Ukrainian church and to securing the Tomos from Constantinople, Poroshenko would regularly use public appearances to draw parallels between Ukrainian religion, state security, and national identity. In these appearances he would make explicit references to the relationship between Ukrainian social and political development on the one hand, and the historic presence of Christianity on the other. An analysis of his remarks throughout the year provide the most pertinent examples of how Poroshenko addressed Brubaker's question of '...what is distinctive about us...'. Speaking at the 1030th anniversary of the adoption of Christianity by Volodymyr the Great in 988AD, Poroshenko argued that this conversion set the tone for Ukrainian development:

Over a thousand years ago, St. Vladimir made a fatal choice – he joined Christianity himself and baptised the country. Since then, our people have been consolidating around the spiritual ideas of justice, charity, love for the neighbour, goodness and truth. (28/07/18c)

Poroshenko presents Christianity as fundamentally important for the development of Ukrainian national ideas and identity. Throughout his Presidency he sought to argue that religion has a natural part to play in Ukrainian national development, especially since the collapse of the USSR. He therefore presents the religious revival of the immediate post-Soviet years, like the 'return-to-Europe', as an organic process which should be nurtured and continued:

Before the eyes of the Patriarch, an independent Ukraine grew and strengthened. We restored our religious life after decades of atheistic persecution, fostered hope for an autocephalous church and build the necessary organisation structure for it. (28/07/18c)

He continues that since the adoption of Christianity was so conducive to the development of the Kyivan state under Volodymyr and Yaroslav, and allowed those princes to better inject themselves into the European political sphere, the creation of an autocephalous, national church can necessarily be seen as a part of Ukraine's 'return-to-Europe':

Christian choice was simultaneously a European choice. And the defining part of the European idea is freedom. (28/07/18c)

This linking of religion with political sovereignty and national identity is a key theme of Poroshenko's public speaking. In the same speech he argues that Ukrainian independence is ultimately incomplete without the Tomos and thus political development is impeded by the lack of a national church:

Tomos of Autocephaly will complete the consolidation of independence of our state, strengthen religious freedom, interconfessional peace. It will strengthen the rights and freedoms of citizens... Autocephaly is an issue of our independence. This is an issue of our national security. (28/07/18b)

In Poroshenko's 'construction of identity' (Fairclough, 1992: 87) autocephaly would strengthen Ukrainian national identity by granting Ukrainian Christianity a place amongst what he describes as '...the constellation of independent and equal national Churches...'. His position design (Gee, 2014: 21) is explicit: Ukraine cannot be truly independent and sovereign without a national Orthodox church, recognised as equal within world Orthodoxy.

It is important to note that throughout his speeches and public statements, Poroshenko never refers to a church created through the Tomos as a 'state' church. For Poroshenko, the passing of the Tomos as an accelerant to European-style development necessarily means protecting the tolerance and respect for multi-confessionalism outlined in the constitution. Poroshenko's develops a vision of Ukraine in which all religions are welcome for as long as they do not undermine the security of the state by acting in the interests of another, something which the UOC-MP is often accused:

Tomos, may God send it to us, does not mean that a state church will appear in Ukraine... I guarantee that the authorities will not interfere in purely internal church affairs. But I emphasize, however, that other states will not be allowed to do so. For this I consider it absolutely necessary to cut off all the tentacles used by the country-aggressor within our state body. (28/07/18a)

Poroshenko's Speech at the Independence Day Parade, 24th August 2018

By 2018 significant steps had been taken by Poroshenko's administration to achieve what Zelenskyy would later call 'spiritual independence' (01/12/22). Speaking at the 2018 Independence Day Parade Poroshenko began with a quotation from *The March of the New Army*, a military song which '...symbolises the inextricable bond between different generations of fighters for freedom of the homeland' (31/08/18). The central theme of the address is Ukrainian sovereignty, something for which religion was becoming increasingly important. The speech is a strong example of how Poroshenko incorporated religious ideas and rhetoric into his wider policy ideals on Ukrainian statehood and national identity and how religion is key to understanding Poroshenko's approach to addressing Brubaker's questions.

In his speech Poroshenko outlines further steps that must be taken for Ukrainian development; religion takes up significant space in the speech.

There cannot be a free body when the soul is in captivity. Let us be heard today in Constantinople, Moscow and the Vatican. We are determined to put an end to the unnatural and non-canonical dependence on the Russian Church of a significant part of our Orthodox community. A Church that sanctifies Putin's hybrid war against Ukraine, prays day and night for the Russian government and for the Russian army. (31/08/18)

Particular attention should be paid to the first sentence: 'There cannot be a free body when the soul is in captivity.' Within this utterance can be seen the whole motivation for the pursuit of the Tomos from Constantinople and the creation of an Autocephalous Ukrainian church; Ukraine can never be truly independent as long as any ties with Russia – political, economic, or spiritual – remain. This is at the forefront of Poroshenko's speech:

First. We break all the fetters that connect us with the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. To make independence irreversible, make Ukraine great and strong, without any prospect of returning to the Russian influence zone – that is the main task of our generation. This is a task of the society and the authorities elected by it. (31/08/18)

How then does Poroshenko tie religion to Ukrainian history and national identity in his Independence Day address? How does this speech aid in understanding how Poroshenko approached questions of identity? It is common for Russian propagandists and proponents of the 'Russian World' ideology to claim Moscow as a 'Third Rome' and a global centre of Orthodoxy with a corresponding right to exert ecclesiastical influence in other Orthodox states, especially Ukraine. Poroshenko here rejects the notion that Ukraine owes its Christian traditions to Russia, instead arguing that Christianity could not have spread in Eastern Europe if not for the early Kyivan state, something which Zelenskyy would later use. Similarly to Volodymyr the Great and Yaroslav the Wise, Poroshenko argues that an independent state both deserves and requires an independent church:

Baptism came to us from the Constantinople Mother Church. And it is from Kyiv that it was spread all over Eastern Europe. Ukrainian Christianity has more than a thousand-year history, its own theological, liturgical and ecclesiastical tradition. Now that we have restored and defended the state independence of Ukraine with the capital in Kyiv, there is no reason why there should not be an Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine equal to the other autocephalous Orthodox Churches. (31/08/18)

This speech allows for a clear understanding of Poroshenko's ideas of the role of religion in politics and national identity towards the end of his presidency; the creation of an autocephalous Ukrainian church was the next step in securing independence and sovereignty. The speech is a perfect example of Poroshenko's securitisation of religion, through which questions of autocephaly became inseparably intertwined with questions of identity, patriotism and sovereignty. Poroshenko tells the crowd that religion can no longer be totally isolated from politics:

The issue of the Tomos of Autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine goes far beyond religion. It is similar to the strengthening of the army, protection of the language, struggle for membership in the European Union and NATO. This is another strategic benchmark on our historic path. This is a significant component of our independence. (31/08/18)

Poroshenko here presents the idea of Ukraine as both a nation on an unstoppable return-to-Europe and in inseparable communion with its past, with religion playing a central role in Ukraine's past and future. Delivered during the height of discussions with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, Poroshenko's position design (Gee, 2014: 21) is to convince his listeners that religion has and continues to play a vital role in Ukrainian statehood and that, given this importance, there must be political efforts for autocephaly. Poroshenko's religious policy of pushing for an autocephalous Ukrainian church at the expense of the UOC-MP demonstrates a 'construction of reality' (Fairclough, 1992: 87) in which religion is inevitably tied to questions of sovereignty and security but without holding overdue power or infringing on the rights of other believers by creating a 'state' church..

The Impact of the Poroshenko Presidency

How then does an analysis of sources from the Poroshenko presidency answer the research questions posed in chapter one? What role did religion play in informing ideas of Ukrainian national identity during his presidency? Why was religion politicised despite constitutional separation? What was the importance of religion in debates on Ukraine's choice between an Eastern- or Western-oriented future?

Poroshenko explicitly tied religion to the development and protection of Ukrainian national identity, statehood, and sovereignty. The creation of a national church and the recognition of autocephaly from the Ecumenical Patriarch were for Poroshenko essential milestones in completing Ukraine's independence and separation from the legacy structures of the Russian

Empire and the Soviet Union. Through his references to the historicity of Christianity in Ukraine, Poroshenko creates a link between Ukrainian identity and Christianity, the latter playing an instrumental role in the development of the former. Ukrainian national identity during the Poroshenko presidency can be seen as a combination of European democracy and civil society with respect for multi-confessionalism on the one hand, and a commitment to history and tradition on the other. At the same time he was careful to ensure that while the creation of a new church had state support, the state did not interfere in the free practice of other religions by Ukrainian citizens. Whilst the politicisation of religion did not start with Poroshenko, it was under Poroshenko that the state took a much more active role in promoting the idea of a national church. This increasing politicisation of religion can be directly attributed to the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the failure of the UOC-MP to adequately distance itself from the ROC in the early days following Euromaidan and the annexation of Crimea. Although there are individuals within the UOC-MP who have distanced themselves from the position of the Russian Church and pro-Russian clerics, the Church itself is seen as a tool of Russian soft power in Ukraine, especially since the start of the invasion in February 2022. Poroshenko saw the creation of the OCU and the passing of the Tomos as part of Ukraine's 'return-to-Europe' and as a firm rejection of any lingering cultural or political ties with the Russian Federation. In his speech on 24th August 2018 Poroshenko spoke of breaking '...all fetters that connect us with the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union...' (31/08/18) and of religion being an integral element of this. The Tomos itself is a tool for Europeanisation and the development of European-style democracy and governmental standards; until autocephaly is achieved, Ukraine cannot be truly independent or European.

Zelenskyy

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Volodymyr Zelenskyy has become a household name. His speeches to parliaments and legislatures globally have ensured that support for Ukraine continues as the war moves towards its second year. Zelenskyy has become the face of Ukraine's existential defence against Russian aggression. His use of religious rhetoric to inform ideas of Ukrainian national identity shifted drastically with the start of the invasion and this is reflected in how recent the sources analysed are. As noted in chapter four, before the war Zelenskyy and his team departed from Poroshenko's approach, limiting themselves to a constitutional approach. Since the invasion it is easier to trace the process through which Poroshenko has influenced his successor, with

Zelenskyy adopting and developing Poroshenko's emphasis on autocephaly as a necessary precondition for complete independence.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Inaugural Address, May 2019

If Volodymyr Zelenskyy's inaugural address, delivered to the Verkhovna Rada on 20th May 2019, can be reduced to one theme, it is unity. Although the address is lacking in religious references, it is still relevant to this thesis and aids in a stronger understanding of Zelenskyy's religious politics and use of religious rhetoric later in his presidency. In many ways Zelenskyy's words echoed those of his predecessor, Poroshenko, in that they stressed the need for a strong Ukrainian identity and a continued effort to 'return-to-Europe'. Like Poroshenko, Zelenskyy began his speech by addressing Ukrainians across the country and the occupied territories, his position design (Gee, 2014: 21) being to stress the indestructibility of Ukrainian identity, even amidst war and occupation:

We are all Ukrainians... From Uzhgorod to Luhansk, from Chernihiv to Simferopol, in Lviv, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Dnipro and Odesa – we are Ukrainians. And we have to be one. After all, only then we are strong. (20/05/19)

Zelenskyy devotes significant attention in the address to what he sees as the shared responsibility of all Ukrainians in building a strong, modern and European state, one which takes full advantage of the Revolution of Dignity and leaves behind the corruption and maladministration of the past. At the time of the address the War in Donbas had been underway for five years and its effects continued to disrupt Ukrainian society. Zelenskyy argues that all Ukrainians must make a common effort to improve the standards of government and politics in Ukraine:

...each of us is President. Not just the 73% who voted for me, but all 100% of Ukrainians. This is not just mine, this is our common victory. All this is our common change that we are responsible for together. (20/05/19)

As in Poroshenko's address there is great attention paid to Ukraine's undeniable Europeanness but also emphasis on the role that Ukrainians must play in affirming themselves as Europeans and their country as an integral member of the European community:

Our European country begins with each of us. We have chosen a path to Europe, but Europe is not somewhere out there. Europe is here (*Zelenskyy points to his head*). And after it appears here, it will be everywhere, all over Ukraine. (20/05/19)

A key theme of Zelenskyy's address is the need to expand the level of national consciousness throughout Ukrainian society. He sees a lack of attention given to the people of Donbas as a key reason for the disconnect between the region and the rest of the country. For Zelenskyy it is not enough to simply tell people that they are Ukrainians, they must be made to feel Ukrainian and be able to take pride in it:

Both Crimea and Donbas have been our Ukrainian land, but the land where we have lost the most important thing – the people. Today we have to return their minds – that's what we have lost. Over the years, the authorities have not done anything to make them feel Ukrainian and understand that they are not strangers, but they are our people, they are Ukrainians. (20/05/19)

There is a detectable air of tension between the new President and those parliamentarians loyal to his predecessor in the Rada. Zelenskyy's tone shows his frustration with the lack of deliverance on the promises of the Revolution of Dignity, the lingering presence of corruption and soviet-era practices in government. He makes it clear that his election, with an unprecedented majority of 73%, marks a new type of government, one rooted in service to the people:

I do not understand our government that only shrugs and says: 'There is nothing we can do.' Not true. You can. You can take a sheet of paper and a pen and free your seats for those who think about the next generations and not about the next election! Do it and people will appreciate that. (20/05/19)

Zelenskyy is unconcerned with his popularity in the Rada, beginning his presidency with a mixed approach of Ukrainian unity and civility on the one hand and defiance on the other. He tells the parliamentarians that in voting for him the Ukrainian people are demonstrating their frustration with the state of affairs and their desire for real change:

Your applause is pretty light... I guess not everyone likes what I'm saying? Too bad, since it's not me, but the Ukrainian people who is saying that. (20/05/19)

My election proves that our citizens are tired of the experienced, pompous system politicians who over the 28 years, have created a country of opportunities – the opportunities to bribe, steal and pluck the resources. (20/05/19)

In his speech Zelenskyy's 'construction of reality' (Fairclough, 1992: 87) is one of Ukraine as a nation plagued by unfulfilled promises, lacking in political transparency and accountability and under the control of greedy elites apathetic towards the real needs of the people. In his inaugural address Zelenskyy drew a line in the sand and, building on Poroshenko's ideas, proposed a new idea of Ukrainian national identity, defined by a vision of Ukraine as an undeniably European state with a united people and a strong government working to be benefit of the people, rather than at their expense.

In comparison to Poroshenko's inaugural address, Zelenskyy's appears brief and succinct. His concluding announcement that he is dissolving the Verkhovna Rada shows his commitment to a new Ukrainian order. Although Zelenskyy took a far less security-oriented approach to religion than Poroshenko, religion has been a central element in the President's rhetoric since the launch of Russia's invasion. The themes outlined in his inaugural speech are present in speeches and addresses throughout Zelenskyy's presidency; there is an unwavering commitment to Ukrainian unity and sovereignty, the development and Europeanisation of the state, and the creation of a strong Ukrainian national identity in every area of the country. As will be seen below, Zelenskyy's incorporation of religious rhetoric into his politics is almost always in the context of Ukraine's relationship with Russia. Despite a relatively secular start to his Presidency, and even a rejection of Poroshenko's support for the newly-formed OCU, Zelenskyy's rhetoric has increasingly emphasised the links between Ukrainian independence and identity on the one hand and religion on the other; a strong multi-confessional society is, for Zelenskyy, indicative of Ukraine's progress on the 'return-to-Europe'. Like Poroshenko, then, Zelenskyy's ideology has moved with events.

Kyivan Rus'-Ukraine: Zelenskyy's Address on the Anniversary of the Christianisation of Kyivan Rus', 28th July 2021

As seen above, Petro Poroshenko's 2018 address at the ceremony to mark the anniversary of the adoption of Christianity by Volodymyr the Great focused extensively on the issue of the Tomos of Autocephaly, arguably his greatest project as president. If Zelenskyy and his team seemed publicly apathetic to religion in the early days of his administration, his speech at the 1030th anniversary of Christianisation marked a turning point. It is in this speech and similar

addresses delivered after the start of the full-scale invasion that we can most clearly deduce Zelenskyy's answers to Brubaker's questions of identity, especially '...what is distinctive about us as a people, in terms of our history, character, identity, mission, or destiny...'. From Zelenskyy's speeches, the answer seems to be Ukraine's Christian heritage and history. Speaking in St. Sophia's Cathedral, one of the oldest places of worship in Ukraine, which Zelenskyy describes as '...the majestic guardian of Ukrainian statehood – the history of Kyivan Rus...', the President expounds on a range of topics including Ukrainian sovereignty, the place of religion in Ukrainian history and the longevity of Ukrainian identity across time. Zelenskyy stresses that the modern Ukrainian state is the only legitimate successor to the medieval Kyivan state and that, as Poroshenko also argued, the conversion was hugely significant in both Ukrainian and Eastern European development. Zelenskyy makes clear that the legitimacy of the Ukrainian state is long established and non-negotiable and that Christianity is a central pillar of this sovereignty:

Today we celebrate the Day of Christianisation of Kyivan-Rus'-Ukraine. This is the official, and most importantly, historically fair name of the holiday, which emphasises the inseparability of the two states. (28/07/21)

Zelenskyy focuses less on the role of religion in strengthening sovereignty than his predecessor and instead emphasises the historical importance of religion in the formation of the nascent Ukrainian state and Ukrainian political identity. The significance of the adoption of Christianity by what Zelenskyy calls 'Kyivan Rus'-Ukraine' is a focal point of the speech; it was this adoption, Zelenskyy argues, that facilitated the spread of Christianity in Eastern Europe:

Ukraine is the successor of one of the most important states in medieval Europe. In its capital, which is the capital of modern Ukraine, the history of Christianity in Eastern Europe began... (28/07/21)

The invocation of the sovereignty of Kyivan Rus' in the speech is laden with references to Russia and its attempts to undermine Ukrainian sovereignty through its actions in Crimea and support for rebels in Donbas. Although the Russian Federation recognises the historical legitimacy and importance of medieval Kyivan Rus', it sees the medieval polity as a predecessor to the modern Russian state, not the Ukrainian. For Zelenskyy, however, Ukraine, by virtue of a shared capital, is indisputably the heir and successor to Kyivan Rus' and any claims to the contrary by Russia are illegitimate:

Kyivan Rus' is the mother of our history. 24 regions of Ukraine and the Crimean peninsula are her own children. And they are rightfully her heirs. And cousins and distant relatives should not encroach on her legacy. They should not try to prove their involvement in the history of thousands of years and thousands of events, being from the places where they took place thousands of kilometers away. (28/07/21)

Zelenskyy's reference to the '24 regions of Ukraine and the Crimean peninsula' reflects his wider dedication to creating a united Ukrainian state within the pre-2014 borders; the occupation of Ukrainian territory by rebels and a foreign army must not be considered anything other than temporary.

It is clear from this speech that within President Zelenskyy's 'construction of reality' (Fairclough, 1992: 87) religion has a clear and definite role and significant influence in Ukrainian history and identity. He draws attention to the myriad religious sites in Kyiv alone – the St Sophia, St Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery, the monastic complex of the Pechersk-Lavra – arguing that these places reflect the history of the Ukrainian state. Something may be lost but it is taken back:

We are always building something. Sometimes someone is fascinated by it, sometimes someone captures it. But we always come back and always get it back. And today we must jointly strive for one thing: not to lose what is built, to restore what is destroyed, to return what is captured. And to save all this forever together. And therefore – to save ourselves and the state. (28/07/21)

What then is Zelenskyy's position design (Gee, 2014: 21) in his address from St Sophia? There are several key points which he uses to promote his ideas of what it means to be Ukrainian, historically and in the present. Zelenskyy presents the Ukrainian state as perpetual and continuous, rooted in ideas and institutions laid down in the early medieval period and carrying on into the present. This is the source of, to answer Brubaker, what makes Ukraine '...distinctive.'; to be Ukrainian is to be heir to the legacy of a great history and state, something which all Ukrainians have a stake in and which they have a responsibility to maintain. This responsibility is something that Zelenskyy would return to in later speeches, such as his 2022 address to mark Constitution Day. Although that speech was given during vastly different circumstances to the one examined here, it calls on Ukrainians to defend their national unity and to share in a common responsibility to uphold their state and constitution in explicitly religious terms:

This is the responsibility to God, to one's own conscience, to previous, present, and future generations. (28/07/21)

As their Kyivan predecessors laid the foundations for the modern Ukrainian state, so too must the current generations of Ukrainians defend their state for the future. He concludes his address on the Day of Christianisation with an appeal to this idea:

Let's remember the past, act today and think about the future. (28/07/21)

Religion then undoubtedly plays a central role in Zelenskyy's ideas of Ukrainian national identity. While his use of religious rhetoric focuses on Ukrainian history, legitimacy and the victory of good over evil, his administration has taken some influence from Poroshenko's approach in viewing religion as both a private affair of the individual and as an issue of national security.

Spiritual Independence: 1st December 2022

Petro Poroshenko's motivation in acquiring a Tomos and overseeing the creation of a national church of Ukraine was rooted in the idea that Ukraine could not be fully independent without such a church – 'There cannot be a free body when the soul is in captivity' (31/08/18). This idea has been adopted by the Zelenskyy administration as Russia's war against Ukraine continues. Zelenskyy begins with another appeal to the unity of country, as expressed in the mass support for independence demonstrated in 1991 across all regions, including Donbas and Crimea:

None of our people remained outside the All-Ukrainian decision. Kyiv and Sevastopol, Odesa and Crimea... Donetsk and Kherson, Zaporizhzhia... Everyone expressed their support. (01/12/22)

This address allows for clear process-tracing between the Poroshenko and Zelenskyy presidencies with the latter building on the securitising measures of the former. Zelenskyy's initial hands-off approach to religious matters has been abandoned in the context of increased Russian aggression and, like his predecessor, he now presents religion as having an explicit link to Ukraine's political independence. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine is an integral piece of the process through which Zelenskyy's thinking has shifted, and he now sees the UOC-MP and its pro-Russian clerics in the same light as his predecessor: as a tool of foreign power and ambition. For Zelenskyy then, the UOC-MP is a hangover of Russian control and therefore

a tool for sustaining Russian influence in Ukraine. Only by removing this covert influence can Ukrainian independence be guaranteed.

Ukrainians will never again be gears of some empires. We have already gained it and we will ensure the full independence of our state... We will never allow anyone to build an empire inside the Ukrainian soul. (01/12/22)

We can trace the process through which the Russian invasion has impacted religious thinking in Ukraine by comparing the approaches taken by Poroshenko then Zelenskyy. Poroshenko's approach was to limit the covert influence of the UOC-MP⁴ in the context of the War in Donbas, Zelenskyy is moving to completely restrict the freedoms of religious groups with ties to hostile states; the start of Russia's all-out war against the Ukrainian state necessitated such a shift in Zelenskyy's thinking. Zelenskyy himself argues that such initiatives are part of the continuing process of breaking down what Poroshenko called the 'fetters' (31/08/18) tying Ukraine to Russian-dominated history:

With these and other decisions, we guarantee Ukraine's spiritual independence... in 1991, our state embarked on the legal and democratic path. We will continue this path. Only legal steps. Balanced decisions. And national interests. (01/12/22)

The shift in Zelenskyy's thinking can therefore be seen as a result of both the policies of his predecessors to the UOC-MP/ROC and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Given the lack of references to religion from his early presidency, it is obvious that Zelenskyy's policy has been reactive, responding to events as they develop rather than predetermined. His position design (Gee, 2014: 21) here is to convince his listeners that they cannot be complacent about Ukrainian independence but must actively work to ensure its survival and completion, 22 years after the referendum. Returning to Brubaker's theory, Zelenskyy here answers those 'who are we' questions in terms of development by arguing that the job of achieving full sovereignty is incomplete and must be concluded in line with other projects, such as Ukrainian involvement on the global stage; by this point of his presidency religion is an inalienable part of this ambition. A clear process can be traced between Poroshenko and Zelenskyy in this line of thinking; securitisation has intensified in response to events.

⁴ Bill No.5309, discussed in chapter four

Ukraine at War: Zelenskyy's Easter Address, 24th April 2022 & Christmas Day Address, 24th December 2022

Since the start of the war Zelenskyy has made several speeches invoking the historical presence of Christianity in Ukraine as a defense against the Russian invasion. His Easter address, delivered once again in the St. Sophia Cathedral, exactly two months after the start of the invasion, could be interpreted more as a national prayer for a nation under siege rather than a political speech. His Christmas address, filled with biblical references, is a call for perseverance to all Ukrainians and a reminder of what they are fighting for.

In his Easter address Zelenskyy once again touches on themes of continuity with the medieval state by the use of the phrase 'Kyivan Rus'-Ukraine' and invokes his surroundings to argue that Ukraine is a unique state, protected by divinity and religion. The first thing you will see walking through the doors of the St. Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv is a six metre high mosaic of the Virgin Mary, holding her hands up in prayer. This mosaic, watching over the Cathedral since the time of Yaroslav the Wise, is the Oranta and standing beneath it Zelenskyy gave perhaps the most religiously charged speech of his presidency so far. Ukraine cannot and will not lose the war, because it is guided and protected by God through the Oranta, whose protection renders Ukraine indestructible:

The unshakeable pillar of the Church of Christ, the unbreakable wall of the main stronghold – Kyiv, the Unbreakable Wall of the State. As long as there is Oranta, there is Sophia, and Kyiv stands with her, and the whole of Ukraine stands with them.
(24/04/22)

The connection that Zelenskyy makes here between religion and politics is unmistakable; as long as the Mother of God stands in St. Sophia, watching over Kyiv, the Ukrainian state is unbreakable. While some may argue that this rhetoric from a President contravenes constitutional separation of Church and State, Zelenskyy is not promoting the Christian religion but rather seeking to use Ukrainian history and tradition as a morale boost at a time of war. His position design (Gee, 2014: 21) here is to depict Ukraine and Ukrainian identity as something with providential protection in a similar way that such ideas have been used in American politics in the 19th and 20th centuries. Once again Zelenskyy's political ideals of Ukrainian unity, shared responsibility and the ultimate victory of truth are on full display. His language is designed to both incorporate Ukraine's important Christian heritage and to include all Ukrainians regardless of religion:

Great and Only God! Save our Ukraine! Protect those who protect us! These and all our other warriors of light. Save all Ukrainians! We did not attack anyone, so give us protection. We have never destroyed other nations, so do not let anyone destroy us. We did not seize other people's lands, so do not let anyone seize ours. (24/04/22)

This is an especially important excerpt and forms a significant part of Zelenskyy's criticism of Russian religion and morality. Zelenskyy has increasingly depicted the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a battle between two forces: one living in line with Christian doctrine and the teachings of Christ, and the other living outside of these but claiming adherence to them. This way the central message of another address delivered later on the 25th April, following Russian missile strikes during Easter:

So are these people who continued to shell our cities and communities yesterday Christians?... all Russia is doing on the territory of Ukraine – is definitely not Christianity. This is what Christ opposed. (25/04/22)

This questioning of the authenticity of Russian religion forms a part of the Christmas address given by Zelenskyy in December 2022. Religion and invocations of Christianity specifically have become a key component of Zelenskyy's messages to the Ukrainian people and in his political agenda, as will be seen in the next section. In the Christmas address there is once again emphasis on 'God', 'truth', 'spirit' and 'evil' and the idea of Ukraine as a state under divine protection. Zelenskyy's idea of Ukrainian national identity at this point can be summarised as a people engaging in an overtly religious conflict between the principles of righteousness and evil. Zelenskyy echoes the religious rhetoric of US President Harry Truman during the Cold War, who told Americans to '...put on the armor of God...' (Rozell & Whitney, 2007: 116)

Evil has no weapon stronger than the armor given to us by God... We go forward through the thorns to the stars, knowing what awaits us at the end of the road. God is a just Judge who rewards good and punishes evil. Which side we are on is obvious. (24/12/22)

The heavily religious language of the speech is a culmination of a process through which Zelenskyy's thinking has altered radically since the start of the invasion. In his most recent speeches Zelenskyy's position design (Gee, 2014: 21) has been to keep up morale and to use religious language to comfort his listeners and boost their belief in the justice of their cause. His listing of the biblical seven proofs of evil demonstrates explicitly the religious element of the conflict with Russia. Under Poroshenko, the use of religious discourse was largely limited

to the attainment of the Tomos. Process-tracing allows us to see that, building on his predecessor's use of religious rhetoric, Zelenskyy has moved well beyond his early civil approach to, as mentioned above, a Truman-esque position:

The faithful, that is, those who really believe, must be a light to the rest of the world. For more than three hundred days, Ukrainians have been striving for this, proving it, serving as an example to others. (24/12/22)

For Zelenskyy it is no longer simply a matter of securitisation and the creation of a national church. The use of religious rhetoric in politics is a matter of not just sovereignty but survival and the victory of good over evil; the defence against Russia is a clash of civilisations.

The Impact of the Zelenskyy Presidency Up to the Present

How then does an analysis of sources from the Zelenskyy presidency answer the research questions posed in chapter one? By taking a comparative and process-tracing approach we know that in the early period of his Presidency Zelenskyy dedicated himself to a different approach than his predecessor. In his inaugural speech Zelenskyy focused on government reform and delivering on the demands of the Ukrainian people. His inclusion of religious rhetoric in speeches and reference to religion generally emerged during escalating tensions with Russia and the start of the full-scale invasion three years after his election. Like his predecessor, Zelenskyy emphasised the links between Ukrainian religion and sovereignty, stressing the historicity of Christianity in what he calls 'Kyivan Rus-Ukraine' and the important role of Christianity in the development of both the Kyivan State and the Eastern European region. Zelenskyy's approach therefore developed to heavily resemble that of Poroshenko and has since the start of the war arguably gone further than his predecessor. Zelenskyy's presentation of Ukrainian national identity has correspondingly shifted throughout the course of his Presidency. In the aftermath of his election Zelenskyy emphasised anti-corruption, government transparency and competence. Moving forward, towards the start of the invasion, Zelenskyy adopted Poroshenko's approach. As Russian aggression against Ukraine has escalated, religious rhetoric has become a useful tool to demonstrate the legitimacy and historicity of Ukrainian sovereignty. Throughout his Presidency a key theme in Zelenskyy's speeches has been unity. Concerning Ukraine's future orientation between East and West, Zelenskyy continued the advocacy of his predecessor for Ukrainian integration with European structures;

this was a central aim of what he saw as a necessary common effort of all Ukrainians to reform society.

Zelenskyy's use of religious discourse and inclusion of religious rhetoric in politics must be understood within the context of firstly the War in Donbas and secondly the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, both of which have had a significant impact on Zelenskyy's use of religion and religious discourse to inform ideas of national identity. In the current context, Zelenskyy emphasises the idea of good versus evil as a cornerstone of Ukrainian national identity at war. By tracing the process of how Zelenskyy's public use of religious rhetoric has evolved, we can develop understandings of the importance of religion in the Ukrainian political sphere.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

This thesis began with some research questions on the relationship between religion, politics, and ideas of national identity in Ukraine. Using a theory of religion as intertwined with nationalism developed by Rogers Brubaker, I have sought to present a synthesised study of Ukrainian religious politics by comparing the policies and speeches of three Ukrainian presidents across a period of twelve years. The research presented in this thesis shows that religion in Ukraine is closely tied to politics and questions of Ukrainian national identity, especially in the post-Maidan period and that, by comparing the approaches taken by different presidents, a process can be traced through which religious policy has developed. In reviewing the literature on religion and politics in Ukraine, I noticed a lack of synthesised studies comparing the policies of different presidents, how religious policy develops across presidencies and how the influence of religion varies over time and in response to other factors, i.e. geopolitical developments, such as the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. A comparative approach allowed for a more in-depth examination of how religious politics has developed in Ukraine in order to address the research questions.

Under Yanukovich religion formed a wider part of Ukraine's relationship with Russia, as demonstrated by Putin's involvement in the anniversary of the Christianisation of Kyivan-Rus' event. It was Poroshenko who, through his securitising agenda, stressed the importance of religion in Ukrainian national identity as distinct from Russia. This process, in response to the full-scale invasion, was radically escalated by Zelenskyy.

The Yanukovich presidency was a logical starting point given the influence that the policies of this administration would hold over the religious politics of the Poroshenko and Zelenskyy administrations. Through his politicisation of the UOC-MP during his 2004 and 2010 campaigns, Yanukovich laid the foundations for the securitisation of religion under Poroshenko. In the context of the War in Donbas, the annexation of Crimea, and the full-scale invasion, religion in Ukraine is inseparably tied to politics and questions of identity and independence from the legacy structures of the Soviet Union and the ecclesiastical dominance of Moscow.

For Poroshenko and Zelenskyy religious rhetoric was central to the idea of the return to Europe and the creation of an autocephalous church was promoted as synonymous with European-style

modernisation. The UOC-MP has been increasingly perceived as a link to Russia through which Ukraine's internal affairs can be manipulated.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine has given new relevance to the study of religion in Ukraine. Indeed, as shown in the analysis of Zelenskyy's speeches, religious language has been used to boost Ukrainian morale and to provide a sense of continual sacrifice across Ukrainian history; the current defenders of Ukraine are in a sense building on the work of their forebears. As the war continues scholars will find new avenues of interest to study Ukraine. As recently as 2020 Denys Shestopalets argued for greater scholarship on securitisation theory, which he argues has '...not received as much scholarly attention as other areas of security studies...', (2020: 713). Future research could therefore focus on securitisation within the Zelenskyy administration. Future work could also examine the role of religious institutions during the full-scale invasion, i.e. how different churches and religious leaders have responded to the conflict. As seen from Zelenskyy's most recent speeches, religion in Ukraine remains central to debates on national identity. This thesis has demonstrated the importance of understanding religious dynamics in Ukraine for a more holistic study of the country. Future research could therefore take a synthesised approach, examining religion as an integral part of Ukrainian politics.

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