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## THE RELEVANCE OF STUDYING RELIGION AS A FACTOR OF NATIONAL RESILIENCE

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*The concept of national resilience includes a strategy to counter various threats, including terrorism, influence on public opinion, elections and many others. In this instance, the interaction of bodies of state power, civil society and self-renewability is heavily emphasized. However, the religious aspect is not recognized as a vital component of national resilience, and is not considered as a factor of such. The main purpose of this article is to figure out whether religion can, indeed, be a viable component and factor of national resilience, and whether a separate set of recommendations should be developed regarding religion in the context of ensuring national resilience. Religion can be a determining factor of political stability, although this factor greatly varies with intensity and power of influence. The inclusion of religion in the concept of national resilience can limit the freedom of conscience of citizens, if certain religious groups or a system of views are recognized as a threat to the political stability of the state. This greatly contradicts the principles of tolerance and political correctness. On the other hand, one cannot outright deny the possibility of real threats from religious groups of citizens, which, more often than not, causes an imbalance in the political system and promotes the interests of enemy states. Civil society makes a significant and sometimes decisive contribution to countering threats in the religious sphere. Therefore, religion is a core factor affecting national resilience. National resilience is a more promising model for the protection of national interests than the concept of national security, as it is based on the creation of a self-sufficient, partially autonomous system that is capable of countering threats both at the level of coordination of state bodies and civil society. Thus, despite the fact that the recognition of religion as a factor of national resilience is related to the discussion about political correctness and discrimination of citizens, we are dealing with an objective reality in which religion should be included as a factor of national resilience in the strategy of national resilience of Ukraine.*

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**Key words:** national resilience, religion, freedom of conscience, tolerance, national interests, religious organizations.

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## ДОЦІЛЬНІСТЬ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ РЕЛІГІЇ ЯК ЧИННИКА НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ СТІЙКОСТІ

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Концепт національної стійкості включає в себе стратегію протидії різним загрозам, включаючи тероризм, вплив на громадську думку, вибори та інше. Акцент робиться на взаємодії державних органів, громадського суспільства та самовідновлюваності. Проте релігія не визнається компонентом національної стійкості, і не розглядається як чинник національної стійкості. Мета статті – з'ясувати чи є релігія компонентом та чинником національної стійкості, і чи має бути розроблений окремий пакет рекомендацій, щодо релігії в контексті забезпечення національної стійкості. Релігія може бути визначальним чинником політичної стабільності, однак цей чинник має різну інтенсивність та силу впливу. Включення релігії в концепцію національної стійкості може обмежувати свободу совісті громадян, якщо окремі релігійні групи або ж система поглядів визнаються загрозою політичної стабільності держави. Це суперечить принципам толерантності та політкоректності. З іншого боку, не можна заперечувати можливість реальних загроз від релігійних груп громадян, що спричиняють розбалансування політичної системи та сприяють інтересам ворожих держав. Вагомий, а подекуди визначальний внесок у протидію загрозам у релігійній сфері робить громадянське суспільство. Отже, релігія є чинником і фактором, що впливає на національну стійкість. Національна стійкість є більш перспективною моделлю щодо захисту національних інтересів ніж концепт національної безпеки, оскільки спирається на створення самодостатньої, частково автономної системи, яка здатна протидіяти загрозам як на рівні координації державних органів так і громадянського суспільства. Таким чином, незважаючи на те, що визнання релігії чинником національної стійкості пов'язане з дискусією про політкоректність та дискримінацію громадян, ми маємо справу з об'єктивною дійсністю в якій релігія має бути включена як чинник національної стійкості до стратегії національної стійкості України.

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**Ключові слова:** національна стійкість, релігія, свобода совісті, толерантність, національні інтереси, релігійні організації.

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**Formulation of the problem.** The concept of national resilience became widespread and the research about it intensified after the first days of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014. In general, national resilience is considered as a complex phenomenon of counteraction to new and multifaceted threats that are faced by the countries of the West. In particular, these threats have not been recognized as "standard", i.e., with the regular use of armies, but instead complex measures are used, which are used for properly balancing the state and social system. Such multifaceted measures include terrorist threats, influence on public opinion, interference in the election process, political terror and other forms of influence on the political system and society in general. The content of concepts of national resilience is mostly general. This interaction of state bodies, local self-government, civil society and

the need to react to events in certain sectors of public life is greatly emphasized in this instance. In particular, the economic, informational, environmental, military, and political sectors are singled out and threats that may arise are assessed. However, the religious sphere is not a factor, nor is it an element or a factor of national resilience in these instances. Considering current events (Russia's military invasion of Ukraine in 2022, mass terrorist attacks by Hamas on Israel in 2023), religion needs to be studied in the context of ensuring the national resilience of the government.

**Degree of scientific development.** In recent years, the issue of ensuring national resilience has been studied by many Ukrainian scientists. It is of the utmost importance to note the work of the National Institute of Strategic Studies and O. Reznikova, who conducts a comprehensive study of national

resilience in the context of efficiency and public administration and provides recommendations to state bodies regarding the implementation of such a system in Ukraine in her monograph [1]. A fruitful study by the Institute of Political and Ethnonational Studies authored by S. Pirozhkov, O. Maiboroda, N. Khamitov, and others examines national resilience in the context of hybrid threats [2]. The works of O. Sukhodol tackle the issue of adapting the national security system to modern conditions and the development of the national resilience system [3]. The informational and psychological aspect of national resilience is studied in the work of S. Koval [4].

**Unresolved issues, raised within the article.** The concept of national resilience is more effective than the concept of national security. The fact of the matter is that national resilience arose in the West as a reaction to the threats that have emerged at the turn of the new millennium and in the 21st century. These threats are no longer limited to full-scale war and the foreign policy of a government. The national security system is focused on the fact that a government takes part in the protection of its' national interests, and in turn, a specialized state body has to be created for solving every new threat that may arise or already arose.

This approach proved to be ineffective. An example of this were the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, when dozens of US special services failed to warn their citizens of a terrorist threat. And in order to restore the resilience of the nation, the government was cornered into starting a war in Afghanistan, which became a disproportionate use of force in relation to threats to national security.

The system of national resilience focuses on the fact that the system can recover from damage, and most importantly, a system needs to be created which shall not cause any critical damage. That is to say, not all threats can be fully prevented, and therefore there is no need to endlessly create new state bodies and programs for

the purpose of countering hundreds of threats. However, it is necessary to create a system that can be self-sufficient, autonomous and capable of self-repair. In such a system, the civil society and its institutions are given a higher, more important role, and the activity of the state is reduced mainly to the assessment of threats and the coordination of countermeasures with the help of existing state bodies and institutions.

As of now, these systems of national resilience function within the already existing systems of national security. Coordinating state bodies have also been created in this structure of the executive power. In particular, this is the state of affairs that's present in the US, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. In Ukraine, the main coordinating state body should be the National Security and the Defense Council. The very concept of national resilience as a legislative document is currently in the stage of development. In particular, in Great Britain [5] and the United States [6], draft concepts of national sustainability have been created and are at the stage of public discussion.

In Ukraine, particularly in 2021, the concept of national sustainability has been implemented in state documents [7]. In fact, this concept is a part of a plan for restoring a system of national resilience, in which it defines its' main concepts, tasks and strategic goals. The Ukrainian legislation describes national resilience as "the ability of the government and society to effectively resist threats of any origin and nature, to adapt to changes in a secure environment, to maintain its' stable function, to quickly recover to the desired balance after critical situations" [7].

As a whole, the system of national resilience in the sociopolitical ideological context is a system created to resist internal threats caused by external factors. The change in the nature of threats has given birth to a new system of countering them. The fact of the matter is that countries that are weak in the economic and military sphere are unable to exercise direct influence in

international politics. However, these weaker countries are fully capable of negatively influencing the political, economic, ideological, and military spheres of its adversary through interaction with its society from the inside.

In the context of these studies, it is vital that religion shall not be recognized as a viable component of national resilience, and there it is not considered as a factor of national resilience. In fact, this very may be related to the issue of understanding political correctness and tolerance, which makes it unacceptable to consider religion as a factor of national resilience. Since the West, much like Ukraine, postulates the separation of the church from the government, tolerance, equality of any religious organizations, certain difficulties arise in recognizing the religious activities of some citizens as a factor that threatens national security. In accordance to this, it is possible to interpret such activity as discrimination and violation of citizens' rights. However, it is necessary to ask the question: does the core concept of political correctness and the fight against discrimination not violate the principle of science and does not ignore objective reality? If religion, indeed, turns out to be a factor through which some states influence other states, create a destructive influence and make it impossible to perform state functions, then should these scientists and political leaders ignore this fact *just* because a comprehensive response to these cases would be a violation of the principle of political correctness and can be interpreted as discrimination?

**The purpose of the article** is to find out whether religion is a component and factor of national resilience, and whether a separate package of recommendations should be developed regarding religion in the context of ensuring national resilience.

To achieve this goal, **certain objectives** must be resolved. First of all, it is utmost necessary to give a general description of the concepts of national resilience. Secondly, it is required to find

out whether the inclusion of religion as a factor in the concept of national resilience does not contradict the existing human rights and freedoms in general, especially the right for freedom of conscience. It is also mandatory to find out how this inclusion of religion as a component of such resilience affects the effectiveness of the system of national resilience.

**Discussion and results.** Is religion really a factor which affects national resilience on a comprehensive level? On one hand, we can clearly point out the fact that, in the modern world (which is now mostly secularized), the religious factor is not as dominant, and therefore, this religious path appears only as a choice for a citizen, and not as a general factor in government's existence or international politics. In addition, previous studies noted that religion is cited as a reason for social, civil and international conflicts, and not the main root of such conflicts. Therefore, in the scientific and political sphere, the opinion that, after solving socio-economic and political issues, religion will cease to be a reason for any further global conflicts or wars [8].

However, one shall not ignore the fact that in certain countries the religion is dominant in influencing the stability and effectiveness of the political system. A clear example of this phenomenon is Lebanon, where various religious denominations are present (in particular, several areas of Islam and Christianity). Because of the change in the ratio of Christians to Muslims, the country's political system changed over time. Thus, it was the demographic situation in certain religious organizations that caused political transformations, and later that led to a civil war and instability [9]. Moreover, religion does not appear as a cause of this, but instead as one of the factors of conflicts and civil war, because the ideological justification of such a war does seem to tie into religion, since there, people are divided into social groups with different statuses and power depending on belonging to a certain religious denomination. Thus, religion is

the main factor in the stability of the political system in Lebanon (i.e. the main factor in national resilience).

However, if we examine other countries, this importance of religion in influencing political life is not as obvious and binary. That is to say, religion retains its influence, but it is either not as direct, or isn't as clear and cut when put up against political or social contradictions, or indeed appears as an excuse used by one social group to dominate another.

Therefore, it is more expedient to consider religion as a factor of national resilience through specific cases when a specific religion actually affects the functioning of certain specific state systems. Religion is a factor that affects political life, but it too has varying intensity and strength.

Does the inclusion of religion as a factor in the concept of national resilience not contradict the human rights and its' freedoms, in particular the right to freedom of conscience?

Here lies a question of properly articulating this view, for which there may end up being accusations of violation of freedom of conscience. In particular, the legislation of the USA, Great Britain, as well as Ukraine allows practicing any religion, and the most important thing is that discrimination of citizens on the basis of religion is outright prohibited.

When we consider the system of national resilience, we encounter at least two problems that arise at the appropriate stages of ensuring this resilience. The first being a national risk and threat assessment system, which can also be interpreted as expert-level assessments of threats to national resilience. It is necessary to specify this very threat and conduct an algorithm of actions or write them out for self-regulation, where state bodies and the civil society are involved. If in the case of environmental threats, it is possible to specify and prescribe a self-regulation mechanism without problems. In the religious sphere, we need to indicate a specific religious organization or

direction, and indicate that it is dangerous, harmful or potentially dangerous for the national resilience of the state. By those measures, the citizens who belong to this particular organization are recognized as a danger to their government, and this is seen as discrimination against its' citizens, according to their religious beliefs. That is, prior to court decisions, there may be a proper assessment of how harmful these activities of individual citizens are, thus these citizens are recognized may actually be dangerous and those to whom the close attention of state authorities should be paid, or their rights potentially limited.

This second stage needs to implement a certain monitoring of those threats for the means of national resilience, where the threats and factors that can sabotage this resilience are pointed out and, accordingly, the mechanisms of self-regulation and self-reproduction of the system in such conditions are indicated. Thus, in this instance we shall be forced to deal with the fact that the state body discriminates against its' citizens even before the court's involvement, only by belonging to a certain religious organization or, regarding the observance of certain views and ideological guidelines, to which we can include religious views.

This analysis ultimately brings us to the issue of tolerance and political correctness, which are not only an integral part of the legislation on human rights, but a part in the scientists' main approaches to this issue, which these expert assessments can be made up. At the stage of making expert assessments, this may also be a problem, due to tolerance and political correctness needing to be observed in the scientific field, and there must be a legally formalized evidence base to accuse a certain religious organization of such (e.g.: an official court decision).

Thus, there is a certain debate about whether it is possible to ignore scientific objectivity in the agreement of political correctness and tolerance.

In the field of public administration, the question of reconciling the rights and freedoms of citizens regarding freedom of conscience, adhering to the principles of political correctness and tolerance with the possibility of countering objective threats to the state and national security is highly relevant.

In Ukraine, a system of such expert evaluations (religious expertise) within the competence of a state body exists, specializing in promoting the activities of religious organizations and their registration [10]. In fact, here we do not necessarily require a court decision to conclude the danger of certain views and their inconsistency with the law on freedom of conscience or about the potential harmfulness of certain religious organizations.

If we integrate religion as a factor of national resilience into the official concept at the state level, then rather answering our question, more arise here. After all, by classifying a certain religious organization as a threat to national resilience, we thus limit the rights and freedoms of citizens in this field not only of freedom of conscience. Accordingly, such actions can be challenged in court as discriminatory, intolerant and politically incorrect. Moreover, discrimination can be challenged through the judicial system, and intolerance and non-political correctness at the level of public opinion and civil society. In theory, this issue reaches a dead end, since it is vital to have a court decision on the "harmfulness and danger" of this certain organization or this certain system of views, and only by those metrics can these organizations and views be recognized in the system of national resilience as a threat and write down reactions to it.

From a practical point of view, this path seems incredibly difficult and impossible. After all, even the proven illegal activity of the heads of these religious organizations does not mean a reason for eradicating these organizations, since they can simply dismiss their head person from the governing bodies of a religious

community or religious center. As for those views, it is even less likely to accomplish such task, since the statutory provisions of religious organizations cannot contradict the current legislation, since this was a condition for their registration.

Thus, changes in the legislation are necessary. Moreover, fundamental changes that are not limited to amendments to the law on freedom of conscience or the corresponding article in the constitution.

The fact of the matter is that if this presumption of innocence is absolute, the state may be outright paralyzed in response to these threats. Only media activities are able to exert such an influence on society that it supports the government's decision to restrict the rights and freedoms of citizens in the religious sphere in order to ensure national resilience. These can be empirical facts of exceptional inhumanity of a certain organization or the consequences associated with this organization or provocative connections of a certain organization with what society considers evil in moral terms. Such factors are relevant in the massacre of Israeli citizens by members of Hamas in October 7th, 2023. In fact, in this case, the religious factor is so significant and dominant that there is a request from society for exceptional measures of coercion against such people not only for committed crimes, but also for potentially possible ones in the future. Another argument is the inhumane war crimes committed by the Russian army in Ukraine, which are documented and, most importantly, covered by the media and made available to the world community.

However, even such blatant facts justifying the restriction of religious freedoms of certain citizens and organizations, as we see from experience, are completely forgotten and/or erased from public memory. Accordingly, there are accusations against Ukraine and Israel that they do not respect human rights and freedom of conscience.

Sure, the legislation of modern states prohibits certain organizations that are considered terrorist, including religious ones. However, as a rule of thumb, these foreign organizations are prohibited. They are banned simply for the precautions that their harmful terrorist ideologies do not gain any further supporters in the country. However, if within the country there already exists a significant number of these supporters, or even a noteworthy percentage of the population, then what shall be done with this? This is the main problem of national resilience in the context of religion.

Moreover, the religious affiliation of such organizations is not clearly defined.

Furthermore, as O. Predko appropriately emphasises in reference to the issue of security in the religious sphere: "this is a state of stable functioning and distinctive development of the religion-human-state system, which can have both constructive and destructive manifestations" [11: 146].

If there are students, teachers, citizens, politicians in the USA, Germany or France who support the actions of Palestinians or Russians and actually legalize the executions of Israelis and Ukrainians, how should the authorities of these countries react to this; if a significant number of such people speak out with their minds legally? This is the threat that the West is facing, and it is these threats that the concept of national resilience must address.

Civil society and state bodies must act in this instance. In fact, the government should only be the coordinating body, not a specialized machine that solves this or that specific problem. For example, in Ukraine, local self-government makes a decision to ban the activities of the UOC, which "belongs" to the structure of the Russian Orthodox Church. In fact, it is beyond the legal powers of local self-government. In the same way, if pro-Palestinian citizens on the streets of New York tear down announcements about hostages and killed Israelis, then the Americans should not just film it on their phones,

but should use means of influence on these citizens, even close to law enforcement.

During the war, the military and the government are forced to use the principle of expediency, and not to make decisions on every issue that cannot be challenged in a court of law or fear of violating the rights of citizens.

A similar situation can be observed in the sphere of preserving national resilience in the worldview sphere. There are facts about the harmful views or activities of religious organizations that cannot be simply presented in court, but which are indisputable in the media space. It is implied that in court there must be a specific testimony of a specific person regarding another specific person and their activities. However, for example, an interview with Gubarev exists, who's one of the separatist leaders of the DNR, who indicates that when the Russian occupation forces entered the Kyiv region, they were not met as liberators, except for one family. As Gubarev said: "... the family of a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church" [12]. And here is the main problem: the Ukrainian court will not be able to call Gubarev to testify, that is, we cannot find out the actual congregation and the priest. As for the priest's affiliation to this certain religious organization, we can only guess, but here it is obvious that if the ROC under that name does not operate in Ukraine, then Gubarev was ultimately referring to the UOC. In fact, there is a collaboration between a minister of a certain church, if we consider the media space in particular. But in the legal sense, all this means next to nothing. It turns out that we should ignore such statements. However, if there exist this many facts of this nature, and they form a picture of the world that affects the course of hostilities and the worldview of citizens, then how does this evidence tie in? Through these citizens, influence is exerted on more citizens, so we approach the specific function of national resilience, namely, resistance to external influences and restoration of system resilience. How in

this case it is possible to restore the resilience of the system and fight against external influence, without violating Ukrainian laws.

One can agree with M. Kozlovets that "The absence of an integrative ideology (as a state ideology) does not lead to the consolidation of society, but to its division along lines of national, linguistic, religious and cultural characteristics, consistently leads to mutual opposition, resistance and even confrontation of national and cultural segments of the yet integral state" [13: 21]. This moment is especially important for ensuring national resilience.

It is difficult to imagine a rapid modernization of legislation and the understanding of human rights, because ultimately this task is left to the civil scale. This task can only be accomplished when we generally recognize at the societal level that there is not only a war of countries and armies, but a cultural war of Western and Chinese culture, Ukrainian and Russian culture, Israeli and Palestinian culture, Western culture and the culture of radical Islam.

Active opposition to such threats, before the reform of the legislation, is possible only through institutions of civil society, which are more flexible in understanding the laws than state authorities. However, the fact is that due to the institutions of civil society and the right, which protects it, more threats have appeared from religious organizations and systems, whose activities have "blossomed" and gained their supporters within certain Western states. Therefore, it is unlikely to be a sufficient tool for leveling threats contained in the religious sphere to the resilience of the state.

**Conclusions and prospects for further research.** Accordingly, the issue of religion as a factor of national resilience should be developed and substantiated as soon as possible, however, it should be understood that in order to include religion in this system at the state level, changes are needed not only to the legislation, but in general the goal of the approach to the issue of human rights, the understanding of humanism, democracy,

tolerance and political correctness in the context of national resilience.

At the moment, both in Ukraine and in the countries of the West, it is possible to effectively fight threats in the religious sphere both through civil society and state bodies, but only in the "gray zone" due to an existence of a certain flexibility in the field of compliance with legislation. If the chaplaincy is already part of the state mechanism, that being the armed forces, then the process of selecting chaplains must and by law is subject to the requirements of tolerance, non-discrimination, and others. However, both special services and individual heads of units, as well as the Ministry of Defense may not appoint representatives of certain religious organizations that are considered dangerous or harmful to national security to the positions of chaplains. Although state bodies cannot openly argue their decision in this way by law.

Therefore, religion is a factor affecting national resilience, which proves to be a more promising model for the protection of national interests, as it is based on the sustainability of a self-sufficient, partially autonomous system that is able to counter threats both at the level of coordination of state bodies and civil society. Without changes to legislation and, in general, to the paradigm of perception of concepts, tolerance, political correctness, discrimination, it is not possible to create a legislative base at the level of the concept of national resilience regarding countering threats that arise specifically in the religious sphere.

Thus, despite the fact that recognizing religion as a factor of national resilience is related to the debate about political correctness and discrimination of citizens, we are dealing with an objective reality in which religion affects the stability of the political system and the functioning of the state and society in general, and therefore it the question needs scientific study. Moreover, religion should, after this study, be included as a factor of national resilience in the strategy of national resilience of Ukraine.



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