The active and profound politicization of the religious environment of Ukraine is evident today. It includes the interference of religious institutions in politics, on the one hand, and the use of the religious factor by political actors, on the other. This fact has been intensified by the high level of religiosity and public support for the churches in the country. In this situation, different social groups consider the religious institutions of Ukraine according to their political positions. The history of religious institutions and their relationships is assessed in terms of their political effects.

There is an especially complicated situation in the Orthodox environment in Ukraine. There are three Orthodox institutions in the country nowadays – Ukrainian Orthodox Church (in canonical subjection to the Moscow Patriarchate), Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (split from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1989), and Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kiev Patriarchate (split from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate in 1992). Each of these churches support and is supported by different political forces, with opposite political orientations. This situation is complicated by opposition between the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (appeared in 1596 as a result of the Brest Union on the basis of Orthodox parishes on the territory of Western Ukraine that belonged to Rzeczpospolita Polska) and numerous Protestant denominations.

Belonging to a certain confession (or a church) is a factor and sign of political identification of a person and religious community. This environment enables political parties and leaders, the state bodies to manipulate positions of the citizens who belong to a certain church.

Socio-Economic and Political Transformation

Ukrainian society is now in a state of socio-economic and political transformation. Opinion polls show different (even opposing) orientations, aspirations, and positions regarding the further development of the Ukrainian state and
society in the mass consciousness of citizens. A substantial change in the modern phase of development of the country causes changes in all of its social relations, including religious dimensions. Therefore, in many ways, we can trace active and profound politicization of the religious environment of Ukraine. It includes the interference of religious institutions in politics, on the one hand, and use of the religious factor by political actors, on the other. This fact has been intensified by the high level of religiosity and public support for the churches in the country.

**Public Support for the Religious Institutions in Ukraine**

Numerous studies conducted in Ukraine declare that it is the religious factor today that serves as one of the main conflict-generating factors in the system of the state-confessional and inter-confessional relations. According to the international studies, the level of religiosity in Ukraine is very high as compared to the other European countries. The results of the research of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) showed that Ukraine ranks fifth among European nations by the level of religiosity.\(^1\) Taking into account the level of religiosity of the population of Ukraine (according to the results of sociological studies of the Ukrainian Razumkov Center for Economic and Political Studies (UCEPS), 57.8% of Ukrainian citizens identify themselves as believers of various confessions), we can trace the degree of public support for the religious institutions.\(^2\)

According to the research conducted by the GfK Ukraine in March 2009, the level of confidence in the Church among the Ukrainian citizens is quite significant – it is 61.2%. Thus, according to the results of the survey, the church enjoys the greatest confidence among the population of Ukraine (61.2%). It is the highest rate of the public support among all public institutions in Ukraine. The Ukrainian army (28.7%) and police (16.4%) share the second highest level of confidence by the citizens. The last place in this ranking is occupied by the Verkhovna Rada with the level of confidence of 2.7%.\(^3\)

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1 “The Opinion Poll: Ukrainians trust the Church the most, and the Rada – the least” in Correspondent. 12 April 2009 – http://ua.korrespondent.net/ukraine/812006.
3 “The Opinion Poll: Ukrainians trust the Church the most, and the Rada – the least” in Correspondent. 12 April 2009.