

## Socio-Psychological Actualization of Religiousness in War Conditions: An Attempt at Religious Science Objectivation and Expert Evaluation

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### ABSTRACT

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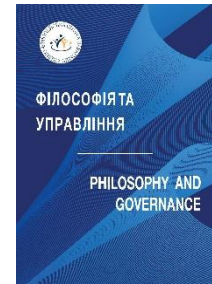
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The actualization of religiosity during the full-scale war in Ukraine is endowed with a socio-psychological context and takes place against the background of the strengthening of the relationship between religious and national identity, the growing role of the Church in the development of a consolidated civil society. The revitalization of religion today is considered a process of restoring the influence of religious reflection, spiritual values and practices, which involves the positioning of the synergy of culture and religion in the substantive value dimension, manifested through the search for meaning and intellectualization of the phenomenon of faith. Special attention is paid to the socio-psychological functions of religiosity in the conditions of war, in particular, the support of psychological resilience, spiritual recovery and the formation of value-meaning orientations of the individual. The growing role of media religiosity and digital forms of religious interaction, which contribute to the consolidation of society and the expansion of citizens' participation in spiritual life, is analyzed. The importance of religious examination and institutional and legal mechanisms in ensuring national security and effective state-confessional interaction in wartime conditions is considered separately.



### KEYWORDS

religiosity, socio-psychological activity, revitalization of religion, Church, war, religious reflection, expertise, freedom of conscience, religious practices.



## Соціально-психологічна актуалізація релігійності в умовах війни: спроба релігієзнавчої об'єктивності та експертної оцінки

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### СТАТТЯ

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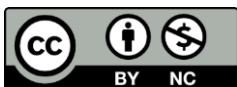
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Актуалізація релігійності у часі повномасштабної війни в Україні наділена соціально-психологічним контекстом та відбувається на тлі укріплення взаємозв'язку між релігійною та національною ідентичністю, зростання ролі Церкви у розвитку консолідованого громадянського суспільства. Ревіталізація релігії на сьогодні розглядається як процес відновлення впливу релігійної рефлексії, духовних цінностей і практик, що передбачає позиціонування синергії культури та релігії в субстанційному ціннісному вимірі, проявляючись через пошук сенсу та інтелектуалізацію феномену віри. Особлива увага приділяється соціально-психологічним функціям релігійності в умовах війни, зокрема підтримці психологічної резильєнтності, духовного відновлення та формуванню ціннісно-сміслових орієнтирів особистості. Проаналізовано зростання ролі медіарелігійності й цифрових форм релігійної взаємодії, що сприяють консолідації суспільства та розширенню участі громадян у духовному житті. Окремо розглянуто значення релігієзнавчої експертизи та інституційно-правових механізмів у забезпеченні національної безпеки й ефективної державно-конфесійної взаємодії в умовах війни.

### КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

релігійність, соціально-психологічна активність, ревіталізація релігії, Церква, війна, релігієзнавча рефлексія, експертиза, свобода совісті, релігійні практики.

## **1. Introduction**

Reflection on the socio-psychological functionality of religion is currently taking place in the context of the analysis of the formation of religious consciousness through the prism of war, aspects of national and cultural self-awareness, social responsibility and the place of the religious component in them. The revitalization of religion and the growth of the role of the Church in the dynamics of the development of modern Ukrainian society in the crisis conditions of war takes place at different levels, from theoretical-methodological to practice-oriented, which is due to both internal socio-political crises and the influence of globalization trends, which in synergy determine the current configuration of religious identity and determine the relationship between the secular and sacred planes of human existence.

Against the background of increased institutional dynamics of religious organizations in Ukraine, there is a need to develop and implement conceptual approaches to an adequate assessment of religious transformations. Modern sectoral discourse actualizes the need to analyze the processes of desecularization, secularization and post-secularity in the context of an interdisciplinary understanding of religious dynamics.

Today, religious expertise is positioned as an effective mechanism for normative, conceptual and axiological support for state-confessional interaction, which opens up new horizons for the practical interpretation of empirical dynamics in the field of religious studies within the narratives of modern social development under the influence of war. This actualizes the need for a more detailed study of the outlined concepts.

## **2. Literature Review**

At the current stage of the socio-psychological actualization of religiosity, the research discourse focuses on the influence of religion as a powerful socio-psychological factor, which often serves as a determinant of moral choice and self-identification in wartime. In particular, as Volotovska [18], Kulahina-Stadnichenko and Nedavna [11], Prorok et al. [14], religious studies reflection in crisis conditions focuses on rethinking the role of the phenomenon of faith in successfully overcoming psychological trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, spiritual support, and analysis of ecumenical relationships. Reflection, according to the authors, is currently undergoing a transfer from theoretical and methodological analysis to a practical dimension. To continue, Kolodnyi and Filipovych [9], Panok and Predko [13] highlight the specifics of religious reflection in the time of a full-scale war: the growth of social influence, focusing on spiritual crises and the search for meaning, ethical assessment of the positions of influential religious figures, and the ecumenical dimension against the background of Russian aggression.

The issue of religious expertise is included in the circle of scientific research by Geraskov [3], Khmilovska [7], Fylypovych et al. [2]. The authors position it as a necessary element of protecting the national interest during Russia's military aggression and the basis for decision-making by relevant state institutions to prevent destructive influence on society through religious structures. Several scholars [1; 5] emphasize the need to use new approaches to analyzing the transformation of key narratives of religious socialization and identity.

Certain aspects of the studied problems are reflected in the works of Kostrub [10], Lomachinska et al. [12], Rybachuk [16], and Kharevych [6]. At the same time, despite the significant attention of modern scientists to the problem under study, the aspects of religiosity as a factor in the formation of the social and psychological basis for the development of society require additional study.

## **3. Problem Statement**

The purpose of the study is to identify and substantiate the socio-psychological transformations of the phenomenon of religiosity during a full-scale war, in particular in the context of religious reflection and expert assessment.

#### **4. Methods and Materials**

The methodological basis of the study is an interdisciplinary approach that combines the provisions of religious studies, social psychology, sociology of religion and philosophy of culture. The theoretical basis was made up of modern scientific publications of Ukrainian and foreign researchers devoted to the transformations of religiosity, the socio-psychological functions of religion and the phenomenon of religious reflection in the context of crisis social processes and military conflicts. The empirical materials of the study were the results of sociological surveys by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology and the Razumkov Centre on the level of trust in religious institutions and the dynamics of religiosity in Ukrainian society, as well as regulatory documents of Ukraine in the field of state-confessional relations.

In the process of research, a complex of general scientific and special methods was used. In particular, the method of theoretical generalization and systematization – for the analysis of modern approaches to understanding the phenomenon of religiosity; comparative analysis – to compare the dynamics of socio-psychological functions of religion in the pre-war and war periods; hermeneutic method – for interpreting the content of religious and socio-cultural narratives; expert and analytical approach – to assess the role of religious expertise in the national security system. Elements of statistical analysis are also used to summarize the data of sociological research and their interpretation in the context of socio-psychological transformations of religiosity.

The application of a comprehensive methodology made it possible to reveal the relationship between social, psychological and institutional aspects of the development of religiosity in wartime, as well as to ensure the validity of conclusions about its role in maintaining psychological stability, social solidarity and the formation of value and semantic guidelines of Ukrainian society.

#### **5. Results and Discussion**

Both civilians and military personnel in wartime need support to strengthen resilience and adaptability, create a stable spiritual support, activate internal personal reserves, and strengthen the value and semantic sphere to achieve a sense of security, social integration, and support [19].

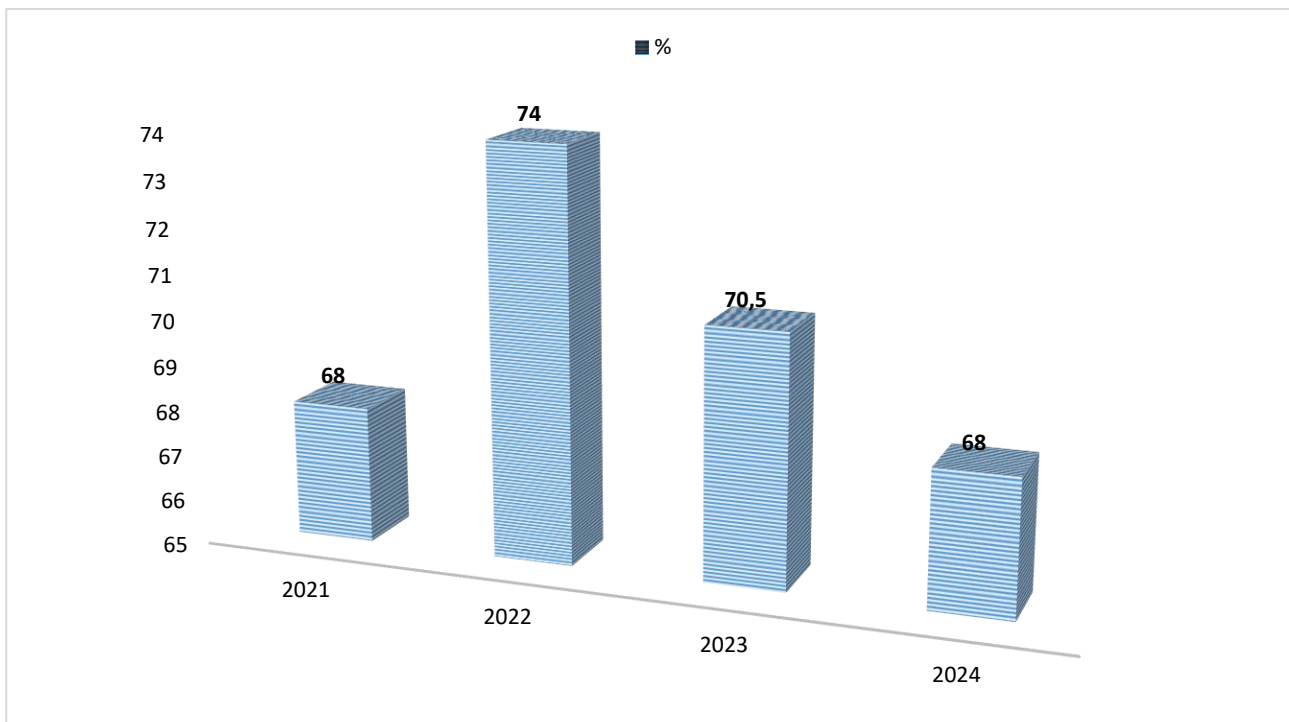
The main directions of actualization of religiosity during the war are:

- moral and social support;
- psychological resilience in the face of distress, loss and the need to adapt to harsh realities;
- formation of the phenomenon of media religiosity through the transfer of traditional religious experience using digital technologies for greater integration into the life of the Church, involvement in common prayer, spiritual accompaniment;
- support of value-semantic concepts in crisis and extreme situations during the war, which allows you to give meaning to trials.

The expansion of the range of opportunities for the development of religiosity in modern conditions of information and communication systems is accompanied by an increase in its influence on the formation of public opinion and moral and ethical assessment of social processes, determining the level of interfaith tolerance in society, and influencing the development of future generations. In this context, the results of sociological surveys on the level of public trust in the Church as one of the key determining institutions of civil society are seen as representative.

Thus, according to the official data of the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, in the period 2017–2020. The level of trust was in the range of 52–57% [8]. The active revitalization of religion in Ukraine at the beginning of the full-scale war is demonstrated by the results of a survey by the Razumkov Centre [15]. In 2022, the percentage of people who positioned themselves as believers increased to 74% (compared to 2021, when the value reached 68%). Already in 2023, this level decreased to 70.5%, and in 2024, to 68% (Figure 1).

It is obvious that the phenomenon of religiosity in the context of the information in Figure 1 positions its perception by society, for the most part, as a resource for overcoming crisis psychological stress. Thus, religious overcoming is one of the most common forms of overcoming, regardless of the initial cultural and religious affiliation of the individual. Within the framework of any religious practice, “salvation” acts as the central semantic construct: from “salvation” in Christianity, the fundamental value and semantic concept, to prosperity in Taoism or awakening in Buddhism.



**Figure 1. Dynamics of the level of religiosity of Ukrainian society**

Source: [15]

In order to fully understand the dynamics of attitudes towards religion in times of war, it is necessary to differentiate the definitions of “religiosity” and “religious faith”. Thus, religious faith is considered the highest value, a special system of worldview, a stable conviction in the truth of the provisions of the sacred texts of a particular religion. At the same time, religiosity is a characteristic of quantitative and qualitative certainty of the subjective assimilation of religious norms, ideas, values, and their influence on life and behavior.

Focusing on the peculiarities of the dynamics of the social context of religiosity, it is advisable to note the key narratives in the present time, in particular, the active and in-depth expansion of the boundaries of educational and scientific activity in the field of theological science; holding sectoral public events; the integration of theological concepts with secular ones as a result of the combination of theology and sociology. In the concepts and directions of religious philosophy, philosophy of religion, and philosophy of culture (which are associated with reflective structures in the religious tradition), it is possible to find logical and terminological analogies with secular forms of scientific knowledge.

The definition of cultural meanings in religious definitions allows us to identify some general concepts of the dialogue between religion and culture: a person who believes in Absolute values and God's providence, shows greater value and social responsibility in crisis conditions, does not lose hope and maintains his own resilience. Therefore, in modern aspects of the Church's religious activity, it is necessary to focus on such formats of interaction with society, where social issues are represented in the format of the search for a practical space of hope as the essence of the axiological foundations of religions. Messages of this kind will serve as a positive motivation for solidarity, social activity, mutual assistance, and mutual support in times of war [4].

Religious studies should be determined in times of war as a component of a holistic national security strategy based on the principles of freedom of conscience and religious pluralism. One of the basic decisions in this direction was the adoption of the Law of Ukraine No. 3894-IX “On the Protection of the Constitutional Order in the Field of Activities of Religious Organizations” on 20.08.2024 [17]. It defines a priority set of measures to limit the influence of foreign religious structures, including the Russian Orthodox Church, bans the activities of affiliated religious organizations, outlines the main mechanisms for checking their ties with the aggressor, and provides for the possibility of applying judicial sanctions. The above-mentioned law also introduced a ban on propaganda of the ideology of the “Russian world”, which contributes to ensuring national security interests and countering destructive external influence through religious structures.

Considering the main institutional and legal instruments of sectoral control, it is necessary to pay attention to the functionality of religious expertise in wartime. The method is based on the principle of cumulation of professional judgments, as well as hermeneutic interpretation and intersubjectivity, which is especially effective in studying the dynamics of dogmatic systems and transforming the processes of religious socialization and identity.

By allowing for the formation of a prognostic model verified by expert opinion, religious expertise pursues such goals as maintaining the validity of sectoral institutional decisions and monitoring compliance. A certain unattainability of such goals is explained, to a large extent, by the shortage of professional religious studies expert personnel, which is facilitated by the gap between academic science and applied activities, as well as the problem of the outflow of intellectual personnel abroad. Applied religious analysis and expertise require the support of the international community of religious experts, which will increase the level of institutionalization of analysis and forecasting based on expertise and the quality of management of the religious situation, and will contribute to the formation of a culture of strategic thinking of the political and managerial elite regarding decisions in the religious life of Ukrainian society.

As for the socio-psychological context of the functions of religiosity in wartime, it is advisable to note the effectiveness of the use of religious values to find a way out of crises, accept difficult experiences, and increase resilience, which becomes especially relevant against the background of the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder both among the civilian population and among military personnel. Increased risks of the syndrome, the prevalence of which reaches 80%, during the war arise due to traumatic experiences and loss of loved ones. Practical programs of spiritual recovery, for the most part, are aimed at integrating religious and cultural-historical heritage into the rehabilitation process of persons critically affected by the war. The significance of these initiatives for the effective fight against psychological disorders has been confirmed by numerous scientific developments.

In fact, spiritual positive changes in this context should be considered as a separate approach that should be used within the framework of psychological practice. In particular, veterans of military operations quite often prefer clergy as an alternative to psychological assistance. The involvement of the clergy is especially valuable in cases where it is necessary to discuss mental health problems, relationships, and traumas. Media resources and digitalization open up broad prospects for actualizing religious reflection for religious overcoming, developing trust in social support, stimulating resilience, and engaging cognitive resources.

Based on the above, it is advisable to single out three main aspects of the socio-psychological actualization of religiosity in times of war:

- 1) value and semantic formation, which contribute to the effective rethinking of experience, even extremely negative, to finding new meaning in the events experienced;
- 2) psychological well-being of the individual, maintaining self-confidence, positive perception of the world;
- 3) practical social support, positioning oneself as a part of the community (Church).

Today, religious organizations have an important role to play in supporting humanitarian and volunteer activities, achieving better psychological adaptation of the population to the challenges of war. At the same time, key attention should be paid to the development of media religiosity: digital solutions transform the religious experience, involve young people in online services, and virtual participation in the meeting of the Church, consolidating society in crisis conditions.

## **6. Conclusions**

The results of the study represent a gradual increase in the influence of religiosity on the development of society during the war, with a qualitative shift in emphasis in socio-psychological functionality. The revitalization of religion today is considered a process of restoring the influence of religious reflection, spiritual values and practices, which involves the positioning of the synergy of culture and religion in the substantive value dimension, manifested through the search for meaning and intellectualization of the phenomenon of faith. Religiosity in the conditions of an exhausting war is an influential social factor that determines moral choice, social unity and psychological stability. At the same time, religious practices allow you to quickly adapt to new realities, overcome traumatic events, find new meanings and activate internal resources, and strengthen psychological resilience

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