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The Concept of the Intermarium and the Confessional Issue: Geopolitical Challenges to Belarusian Orthodoxy in XX – early XXI century

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Abstract. The article discusses the problems of merging geopolitics and religion. Using the example of Belarusian Orthodoxy, the author shows how religious institutions can become instruments for the implementation of geopolitical strategies, in particular the Polish foreign policy doctrine of the Intermarium. The influence of this doctrine on the position of the Orthodox Church in the Baltic-Black Sea region, including on the territory of Belarus, is analyzed. The author examines the specific historical conditions of the periodic actualization of Polish geopolitical projects in relation to Belarus. Using some examples, he shows the technologies of the United States working with the Belarusian anti-Soviet emigration and the technologies of using religious institutions to implement geopolitical strategies. It is concluded that modern interpretations of the Intermarium doctrine are directly related to the policy of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in relation to the East Slavic territories associated with the Kiev Metropolis of the XV–XVII centuries. The assessment of the activities of the primate of the Orthodox Church in Poland on the Ukrainian-Belarusian lands in the first half of the 1940s is new for domestic and foreign historiography as an attempt to build a “church Intermarium”. The article contains unique materials about the anti-Soviet activities of the Belarusian emigration, its contradictions and splits. The findings actualize the issue of developing mechanisms to counteract manipulative influence against the Orthodox Church, carried out in order to achieve political benefits. Based on the results of the consideration of the problem, a recommendation is proposed regarding the need for planned systematic work to strengthen church immunity against external manipulative influence, fraught with disruption of social and confessional balance in the Republic of Belarus.

Keywords: Belarusian Orthodoxy, Polish geopolitics, the concept of “Intermarium”, the Baltic-Black Sea Union, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Belarusian Central Rada, the Warsaw Metropolia

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Introduction

The rapid rise of geopolitical tensions raises new challenges and legitimate questions about the prospects for the development of Belarusian Orthodoxy. At the same time, reflections on the pressing challenges of our time will be superficial without reference to their historical background.

Following the First World War, the revival of Polish statehood was accompanied by the development of the Intermarium foreign policy doctrine. The authorship of this doctrine belonged to the ideologues of the Polish Socialist Party and personally to the future First Prime Minister of Poland Józef Piłsudski (1867-1935). The Intermarium project envisaged a nominal revival of the Commonwealth in the form of a political union (confederation) of Poland with independent, anti-Russian and anti-communist Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Finland in the space between the Baltic and Black Seas. The theoretical development of this project was preceded by the concept of prometheism, declared by J. Piłsudski as early as 1904. It presupposed the Poland's acquisition of leadership in weakening the Russian Empire by supporting the national liberation movements of non-Russian peoples¹. Despite its unrealisation, in the inter-war period the idea of creating the Intermarium as a sanitary cordon», separating Western Europe from the USSR, was widely spread and enjoyed great attention in European political circles.

The comprehension of the internal political and geopolitical aspects of the Intermarium doctrine is widely reflected in Russian and foreign historiography. However, the question of the influence of this doctrine on the position of the Orthodox Church in the Baltic-Black Sea region, including the territory of Belarus, remained outside the scope of research.

Materials and methods

The materials by the Belarusian Central Rada (BCR), the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and J. Piłsudski related to records, official regulations, statements, appeals, resolutions, interviews, correspondence, news and information bulletins, memories were used in the consideration of historical issues. Some aspects of the historical context were covered on the basis of research by Russian and Ukrainian experts. The consideration of the current state of the Baltic-Black Sea project involved the appeal to the publications of the official Internet resources of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Belarusian Exarchate, the University of Marie Curie-Skłodowska in Lublin, GLOBSEC Policy Institute, TASS and "TIME" magazine.

The study was prepared on the basis of the dialectical principles of objectivity, comprehensiveness, specificity and historicism. Conclusions and judgments were formed

¹ Piłsudski Józef. Collective Writings. Warsaw: Jozef Pilsudski Institute, 1937. Vol. 2. pp. 249–258 [In Polish]

through the use of general scientific methods of cognition, such as synthesis and analysis, deduction and induction, abstraction and generalization. Application of such special scientific methods of research as historical-genetic, historical-comparative and historical-systematic contributed to the disclosure of the claimed topic.

Results

After the entry of Western Belarus and Ukraine into the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1921, there were about 4 million Orthodox Christians on its territory. Spiritual care about them was carried out by the Warsaw Metropolia of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). In the context of the construction of the Polish national State, the presence of Russian ecclesiastical jurisdiction was regarded by the Government of the Republic of Poland as undesirable. For this reason, the Polish Ministry of Religious Confessions and National Education initiated the issue of declaring Polish autocephaly with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In 1924, the Polish Ambassador to Turkey, R. Knoll, established an agreement with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, headed by Patriarch Gregory VII, on granting autocephalous status to the Metropolia of Warsaw [12:71]. It is noteworthy that consideration of the issue of autocephaly of the Orthodox Church in Poland was carried out by Constantinople by raising a question about the canonicity of the transition of the Kiev Metropolis to the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate in 1686. At the same time, geographically, the Kiev Metropolis in the second half of the 17th century included the territory of modern Belarus, Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania.

Held on November 3, 1924, meeting of the Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople adopted a conclusion on the annulment of the re-subordination of the Kiev Metropolis to the Moscow Patriarch in 1686.² On the basis of this decision, on November 13, 1924, the Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate approved Tomos about autocephaly of the Orthodox Church in Poland, which was considered as a "fragment" of the historical Kiev Metropolis³. The events predetermined Fener's further activities in the Eastern Slavic region and created conditions for the development of Belarusian, Ukrainian and Baltic church separatism. The historical Kiev Metropolis, declared separated from the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church, was territorially within the space of Piłsudski's Intermarium doctrine. Belarus, Ukraine and Lithuania were excluded by Constantinople from the sphere of Russian ecclesiastical influence. At the same time, there were no recognized autocephalous churches in those regions, which created the conditions for elevation of the figure of the Head of the Orthodox Church in Poland over the territory of Intermarium and was an additional factor in strengthening the position of Poland as a regional leader in Eastern Europe. An important component of this process was the formation of a new Orthodox identity, characterized by the lack of perception of the Russian Orthodox Church as a Cyriarchal Church.

² Autocephalous Church of Poland. Church. 03.01.1925. Σ. 5–6 [In Greek]

³ Patriarch and Synodal-Canon Tomos. Herald of the Orthodox Metropolis in Poland. 1925; 8:1-2. [In Russian]

In the second half of 1930s the Intermarium doctrine gained new relevance due to the activism of the Polish diplomacy led by Yu.Bek, seeking to protect Poland from threats from the major continental powers. At that time, the concept of the Intermarium was supposed to include Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia in the Baltic-Black Sea Union [2:190]. However, the outbreak of World War II changed those plans. The bringing of Western Belarus and Ukraine to the USSR resulted in the return of Orthodox parishes to the Russian Orthodox Church. The situation changed after the beginning of the German invasion, when the Metropolitan of Warsaw Dionysius (Valedinsky) on the basis of Tomos of 1924 made an attempt to extend his jurisdiction to the Ukrainian-Belarusian territories. Despite the disappearance of the Polish state in 1939, he positioned himself as the undisputed leader of church life throughout the Eastern Slavic region. In other words, the Metropolitan of Warsaw had the ambition to implement the idea of Intermarium in the ecclesiastical space.

Having met the prohibition on activities within the Reich Commissariat "Ukraine", Metropolitan Dionysius on December 24, 1941 established the Temporary Administration of Orthodox Church in Poland on the Ukrainian lands and appointed the Archbishop of Lutsk and Kovel Polycarp (Sikorsky) the head of it. Since that time, the formation of the Ukrainian church structure, which does not recognize the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church and is subordinate to Metropolitan of Warsaw, began. In February 1942, under pressure from the occupation authorities, the Ukrainian administration adopted the name "Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church"⁴. [3:205] However, this act was a formal bureaucratic act, not accompanied by the proclamation of autocephaly. That is, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church of the German occupation continued to be a structural subdivision of the Polish Church, being forced to distance itself from direct interaction with it. This situation was resolved by the decree of the Bishops' Council of Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church of April 8, 1944, which conferred the title of Patriarch of Kiev and All Ukraine on Dionysius (Valedinsky) [3:275]. This symbolic action actually completed the process of building the "Orthodox Intermarium" led by the Metropolitan of Warsaw. However, due to the opposition of the Ministry of the Eastern Territories of the Third Reich, the head of the Polish Church was soon deprived of the assimilated powers [3:275-276]. The Nazi authorities relied on deepening divisions in Orthodoxy on the national basis.

Similarly, Metropolitan Dionysius made an attempt to assert his own influence on the territory of the general district "Belarus". In September 1941, he formed the Belarusian Church Council under the Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church in Poland. Not being allowed to lead the Belarusian church life by the local occupation authority, Metropolitan Dionysius sent his representative Hieromonk Vladimir (Finkovsky) [5:114-116]. The latter failed to fulfill his mission and was expelled from Belarus in the beginning of 1942. The autonomous Belarusian Orthodox Church, which emerged during the occupation years, was headed by

⁴ Resolution of Holy Council of Bishops of St. Orthodox Autocephalous Church on liberated Ukrainian lands//Martyrology of Ukrainian Churches: in 4 vols. V. 1: Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Documents, materials, Christian self-publishing of Ukraine. Toronto-Baltimore, 1987:686-687 [In Ukrainian]

the Exarch of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Panteleimon (Rozhnovsky), who did not support the ambitions of Dionysius (Valedinsky) [see more details: 6:40-50].

Liberated from German occupation, Poland found itself in the sphere of Soviet influence, which led to the abolition of Constantinople autocephaly. This had long deprived Polish geopolitical planning in both political and ecclesiastical life. The geopolitical concepts developed in the post-war decades by the emigrant Governments of individual countries had no chance of being implemented by virtue of the Yalta-Potsdam system of power-sharing in the European continent. However, the Intermarium doctrine found new interpretation in Polish emigration circles. In particular, Polish political thinkers Ye.Gedroitz and Yu.Merosevsky proposed the idea of "ULB" (Ukraine-Lithuania-Belarus), which was reduced to the creation of a buffer zone of the Baltic-Black Sea Union in eastern Poland. The realization of the project was seen in the rejection of imperial claims by the Poles, reconciliation between the peoples of the region and recognition of their rights to build nation states [11:17].

After the start of the "Cold War" a new geopolitical configuration was formed, in which the local Orthodox Churches were actively involved. Given the high potential for religious influence on the worldview and political behavior of the religious population, US President Truman chose religion as an important means of combating the expansion of communist influence in the world. That is why in 1948 the U.S. Foreign Ministry acted as an organizer of the removal of the Patriarch of Constantinople Maximus (Vasportsis) and the appointment of Patriarch Athenagoras (Spyrou) the new head of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The latter was placed at the disposal of the highest political elites of the United States and personally President Truman. The US Ambassador to Turkey E.Wilson was directly involved in the change of the patriarch [4:221-229]. After this, the Ecumenical Patriarchate was deeply integrated into the foreign policy of the United States, which was also relevant to the Belarusian confessional issue.

In the post-war geopolitical realities, the center of attraction for the supporters of the Belarusian autocephaly was no longer the Metropolitan of Warsaw, but the Patriarch of Constantinople. The project of organization of the autocephalous Belarusian Orthodox Church, which is recognized by the world Orthodoxy, was launched in 1948 by the functionaries of the Belarusian Central Rada (Belarusian proxy representation established in 1943 by the German occupation authorities). On the basis of Tomos's provisions on the autocephaly of Orthodox Church in Poland, they recognized the Patriarchate of Constantinople as the Cyriarchal Church of the Belarusian people. Having initiated the formation of a foreign Belarusian metropolis in the Greek jurisdiction, the leaders of the BCR counted on the subsequent granting of canonical independence⁵ to it. The first Belarusian parish of Constantinople's subordination was opened by the Belarusian Central

⁵ Coverage of the Belarusian Central Rada. New York, January 30, 1954. Belarusian word. July 2, 1954; the Belarusian Orthodox Church Committee in America. Church Light. 1951; 4-5; Interview with the president of the Belarusian Central Council, Prof. R.Ostrovsky. The latest news. 1948; 2:5-7; Presidium of the Plenum of the Belarusian Central Rada. An appeal to the Patriarch of Constantinople. September 14, 1953. Gordienko A. The Belarusian Central Rada (BCR): creation, activity, decline. 1943-1995. soc., 2016:398-399 [In Belarusian].

Rada in the US in 1950⁶. The very next year, Exarch of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in North and South America Archbishop Michael (Constantinidis) supported the BCR's strategy for the development of the Belarusian church structure⁷. In 1950-1990's the Belarusian Orthodox Church Committee in America, the Church Council of the Belarusian Orthodox Church in North America, the Belarusian Orthodox Church Council in North America have consistently coordinated the formation of the Belarusian Metropolia of the Patriarchate of Constantinople⁸. In 1971, the Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate decided to grant the Belarusian diaspora the right to elect a bishop to head the Belarusian eparchial structure⁹. However, the search for candidates for the episcopal service was not successful, which caused the unrealisation of the plans of the Belarusian Central Rada [see more details.: 8; 10]. At the same time, the BCR succeeded in forming 10 Belarusian parishes of the Greek ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the USA, Great Britain, Canada and Australia [7:208-219].

Special attention to the church project of the Belarusian Central Rada by the American political authorities was manifested in the fact that the administrators (deans) of the Belarusian parishes were regularly invited to the US Congress on the occasion of anniversaries of the declaration of independence of the Belarusian People's Republic (25 March 1918). At that time, Belarusian clerics visited the House of Representatives and before parliamentary hearings on the Belarusian issue they prayed for the independence of Belarus. Visits to the Congress were accompanied by meetings of the clergy with leaders of American political parties and individual congressmen. Such visits happened in 1964, 1965, 1967, 1968, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1977, 1978 and 1979. Throughout 1950s – late 1980s the Belarusian clergy of the Patriarchate of Constantinople demonstrated active involvement in a number of anti-Soviet projects and individual events, which ensured its support to the American administration. However, the representatives of this branch of Belarusian emigration were not able to transfer their activities to the territory of Belarus [see more details: 9:17-24].

The fall of the communist system in the early 1990s resulted in the development of tendencies to establish a unipolar world order with unconditional geopolitical leadership of the US. However, the strengthening of the position of the Russian Federation in the international arena in the 2000s led to the revival of the Intermarium doctrine as a regional alliance of the Baltic-Black Sea countries that are under the direct influence of the United States. As early as in 2011, American political analyst J. Friedman predicted the strengthening

6 The Belarusian Orthodox Church Committee in America. Church Light. 1951; 1:4-5 [In Belarusian]

7 Chairman of the Belarusian Orthodox Committee in America at an audience with His Eminence Archbishop Michael. Church Light. 1952; 2:11 [In Belarusian]

8 Belarusian Orthodox Church Committee in America: 4-5; resolution of the Congress of Orthodox Belarusians: clergy and believers from America and Canada since August 31, 1958 in South River, New Jersey, USA. Church Light. 1958; 9:5; Church Congress. Belarusian Thought. 1969-1970; 12-13:36; Church Congress. Church Light. 1970; 19:30. [In Belarusian]

9 I.K. archpriest. M.Lapitsky. Belorusskaya mysl. 1976; 20:18-21 [In Belarusian]; Byelorussian Council of Orthodox Churches in North America. Church Light. 1981; 31:34; Letter to Rev. Father Nikolaj Lapitzki, Whiteruthenian Greek-Orthodox Church of St. Euphrosynia, South River, New Jersey, from Very Rev. George J. Bacopulos, Chancellor of Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. June 18, 1971. Rutgers University Libraries. Zaprudnik J. Collection. Box 2. Lapitski Mikalaj, 1907-1976. Papers. Folder 40; Chicago (Church affairs): 9.

of Poland's role in the Intermarium project [13:17, 82]. After a short time, these predictions began to be translated into political reality. Thus, the Polish electoral campaign of 2015 was accompanied by the inclusion of statements on the creation of the Intermarium in the electoral rhetoric of the winning President A. Duda and the Parliamentary Party "Law and Justice". Based on the reconciliation concept of ULB, these political forces are building the concept of Intermarium based on the current geopolitical status of Poland as a member of the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance. In this regard, the leading role of the United States is taken into account¹⁰, which opens up new prospects for the actions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the implementation of the geopolitical initiative.

The "Three Seas Initiative" and the "Lublin Triangle" have been notable manifestations of Poland's focus on strengthening influence in Eastern and Central Europe in the last decade. The project "The Three Seas Initiative" ("Trimoria") launched in 2015 is actually a new reading of the Intermarium doctrine, envisaging the formation of a confederal state in the central and eastern European region. The goal of its formation was to jointly restrain the influence of Germany in the west and Russia in the east with a moderating role for Poland¹¹. It is noteworthy that this initiative was supported by the United States, which viewed Poland as the coordinator of their own foreign policy in Europe after the weakening of the United Kingdom in the wake of the Brexit. The second summit of the Three Seas Initiative, held in 2017 in Warsaw, was personally attended by U.S. President Trump. In his address he outlined the goal of the project as "revival of economic relations between the United States and the former communist countries of both Central and Eastern Europe"¹².

Another manifestation of the idea of the Baltic-Black Sea Alliance was the signing of a declaration on the creation of a new format of cooperation between the three countries - the so-called "Lublin Triangle" by the Foreign Ministers of Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine on July, 28 2020 in Lublin. The goal of its formation was to strengthen the interaction of the participating countries in the political, economic, military-technical, scientific and cultural spheres. At the same time, the Polish and Lithuanian sides declared their support for Ukraine in the sphere of its European and Atlantic aspirations¹³.

10 Dostál V. New 'Intermarium': What Poland wants from Visegrad? GLOBSEC Policy Institute, June 5, 2016. Available from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160728001243/http://www.cepolicy.org/publications/new-intermarium-what-poland-wants-visegrad/>; Sojusz państw od Bałtyku po Morze Czarne? Duda chce odnowić międzywojenną ideę miedzymorza. GLOBSEC Policy Institute, 5 sierpnia 2015. Available from: https://web.archive.org/translate.google.com/web/20161217164322/http://forsal.pl/artykuly/886941,sojusz-panstw-od-baltyku-po-morze-czarne-duda-chce-odnowic-miedzywojenna-idee-miedzymorza.html?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=ru&_x_tr_hl=ru&_x_tr_pto=wapp

11 Three Seas Initiative. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland. Available from: <https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/three-seas-initiative>

12 Farber M. Read Donald Trump's Remarks at the Three Seas Initiative Summit in Poland. July 6, 2017. TIME. Available from: <http://time.com/4846780/read-donald-trump-speech-warsaw-poland-transcript/>

13 Meeting of foreign ministers of Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine. 28.07.2020. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Available from: <https://www.gov.pl/web/dyplomacja/Spotkanie-ministrow-spraw-zagranicznych-polski-litwy-i-ukrainy>; Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Lithuania and Ukraine on the establishment of the Lublin Triangle, Lublin, 28 VII 2020. Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. Available from: <https://phavi.umcs.pl/at/attachments/2021/0803/114847-wspolna-deklaracja-pl-lt-ua-wersja-pl-1.pdf> [In Polish]

It is quite obvious that the intensification of anti-Russian rhetoric typical for a number of European countries contributes to the growth of public support for those political forces which articulate the idea of a Baltic-Black Sea military-political alliance. It is highly likely that efforts to build such an alliance will only increase. In this connection, it is important to note that by its geographical position Belarus divides the space of the imaginary Intermarium into the northern Baltic and southern Black Sea sectors. That is why the theoretical projects of construction of Intermarium include the solution of "Belarusian issue" as its integral part. First of all, we are talking about changing the geopolitical orientation of the republic. The implementation of this project is closely connected with the radical change of the confessional status quo of the Belarusian religious field, the withdrawal of church structures from the Russian Orthodox Church and subsequent entry into the sphere of influence of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. It is necessary to emphasize here that Fener created the necessary ideological prerequisites for this in 1924, declaring the non-recognition of the Russian Orthodox Church's right to spread its influence within the historical Kiev metropolis. The 1971 Synodal Decision of the Patriarchate of Constantinople on the need to open a Belarusian eparchy in the diaspora, although never implemented, was never revoked.

As for the actions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople aimed at withdrawing the territories of the historical Kiev Metropolis from the sphere of influence of the Russian Orthodox Church, they did not continue in the XXI century. In 2018, the Ecumenical Patriarchate implemented a project to create an autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which presupposed the unification and legalization of non-canonical entities (Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and Kyiv Patriarchate)¹⁴. However, Fener's actions in the Intermarium space were not limited to this only. On February, 17 2023, the General Secretariat of the Patriarchate of Constantinople announced the reinstatement of five clergy of the Archdiocese of Lithuania of the Russian Orthodox Church previously deprived of priesthood¹⁵. On March, 20 Patriarch Bartholomew arrived in Lithuania, where he signed an agreement with the Lithuanian government and declared his intention to create the Lithuanian Exarchate¹⁶. As a direct consequence of these acts, on April 6, 2023, two clerics of the Belarusian Orthodox Church who had left for the territory of Lithuania

14 Announcement of the Holy and Sacred Synod (11th Oct. 2018). The Ecumenical Patriarchate. Available from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20181014010432/http://www.ec-patr.org/docdisplay.php?lang=gr&id=2577&tla=g>; Communiqué concerning the new Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Ukraine. Ecumenical Patriarchate Permanent delegation to the World Council of Churches. Available from: <https://www.ecupatria.org/2018/12/19/communique-concerning-the-new-orthodox-autocephalous-church-of-ukraine/>

15 Announcement on the appeal of clerics from Lithuania. Ecumenical Patriarchate. Available from: <https://ec-patr.org/%E1%BC%80%CE%BD%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%BF%CE%B9%CE%BD%CF%89%CE%B8%CE%AD%CE%BD-%CF%80%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%AF-%CF%84%E1%BF%86%CF%82-%E1%BC%90%CE%BA%CE%BA%CE%BB%CE%AE%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85-%CF%80%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%83%CF%86/>. [In Greek]

16 The Ecumenical Patriarchate in Lithuania. LIGHT FANARIOU. Available from: <https://fosfanariou.gr/index.php/2023/03/21/to-ecun-patriarxeio-stin-lithouania/>

and had no canonical leave from the priesthood¹⁷ were accepted into the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The registration of the Lithuanian Exarchate by the Ministry of Justice of Lithuania took place on February 7, 2024¹⁸. Thus, it can now be stated that the Patriarchate of Constantinople demonstrated willingness and determination to intervene in the Belarusian confessional situation by creating and controlling an alternative model of "Belarusian Orthodoxy".

Conclusion

To summarize, it can be concluded that Belarusian Orthodox Christianity is facing challenges stemming from the processes taking place at the level of international relations. Attempts to implement geopolitical projects based on the idea of Intermarium are closely related to the policy of the Patriarchate of Constantinople with regard to the Eastern Slavic territories within the space of the historical Kiev Metropolis. The inclusion of a religious issue in the projects implementing Western geopolitical concepts requires an awareness of the seriousness of the problem and the development of a response strategy. Otherwise, Belarusian Orthodox Church risks being manipulated by external forces focused on political objectives. It seems that systematic work to strengthen ecclesiastical immunity with regard to external manipulative influence can not only ensure the balance of the confessional field of the Republic of Belarus, but also become a significant factor in strengthening social stability.

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17 Alexander Kuchta, cleric of the Minsk diocese deprived of the priesthood. April 10, 2023. Official portal of the Belarusian Orthodox Church. Available from: <http://church.by/news/zapreshen-v-sluzhenii-klirik-minskoj-eparhii-ierej-aleksandr-kuhta>; Decree 13 of 10.04.2023 «On the withdrawal of Archpriest George Roy from temporary assignment and deprivation of the priesthood for one year». Grodno diocese. Belarusian Orthodox Church. Available from: <https://orthos.org/dokumenty/%D1%83%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B7-13-%D0%BE%D1%82-10042023>. (in Russian)

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Contribution of the author

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