

Religious Lobbying: Comparing the Models of the USCCB and the Church of Cyprus

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Abstract

The article discusses the lobbying activities of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Orthodox Church of Cyprus. Both religious interest groups rely on inside lobbying strategies based on their institutional expertise and resources. At the same time, while the Catholic Church in the US is characterised by a combination of inside/outside strategies and framing of its own requests, the Cyprus Orthodox Church prefers a direct impact on policy-makers and does not seek to adapt the language of their political and religious messages.

Keywords: lobbying, religion, Cyprus, church, USCCB

Introduction

The article addresses the issue of religious lobbying in the Republic of Cyprus, comparing the models promoting the interests of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Both the Church of Cyprus and the Roman Catholic Church in the US provide good examples of religious organisations with a clear institutionalised structure and similar agendas. At the same time, the nature of relations with secular authorities, self-positioning and peculiarities of the lobbyist and religious environment in the US and Cyprus, play a significant role in the choice of strategy, tactics and specific mechanisms for the realisation of their interests. Comparison of the lobbying strategies of the USCCB and the Church of Cyprus is of interest from the point of view of analysing the advancement of the interests of religious organisations in different religious markets and with different institutional constraints. While the Catholic Church in the US is

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in a situation of high religious competition and legislative regulation of lobbying activities of non-profit organisations, the Cyprus Orthodox Church is *de facto* in the position of a privileged monopolist not limited to any institutional framework.

Lobbying Strategies

Inside Lobbying

Lobbying strategies in the broadest sense can be divided into insider and outsider strategies. Inside and outside lobbying strategies are presented simultaneously as characteristics of a particular interest group in terms of its involvement in the decision-making process, and as a designation of a chosen type of lobbying strategy involving a certain set of tactical decisions and specific mechanisms for promoting interests.² The insider position gives the group privileged access to decision-makers. An insider lobbyist is usually a large stakeholder with significant resources and personal connections in the legislative, executive, or judicial powers (in those political systems where there is space for judicial lobbying, such as in the US).

In understanding lobbying as a democratic practice that promotes more uniform representation of interests, it is necessary to take into account that insider lobbying is considered primarily in the communication dimension. Access to a decision-maker does not initiate a corrupt interaction but opens up opportunities for a trustworthy exchange of views. An insider group has the ability to convey directly its vision of the problem, knowledge of the situation, expertise, assessment and forecast, thereby reinforcing the position in favour of the discussed decision, or, conversely, contributing to its review.³ Psychological aspects also matter. When making decisions, people tend to give greater weight and importance to the competing position that they hear first. From this point of view, insider access at the preliminary or closed discussion stage gives the group significant advantages.

The existence of insider lobbying groups and interest in their inclusion in the political process is explained by three main motives:

² W. Maloney, G. Jordan, and A. McLaughlin, (1994) 'Interest Groups and Public Policy: The Insider/Outsider Model Revisited', *Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 15, No 1.

³ A. Binderkrantz, (2005) 'Interest Group Strategies: Navigating Between Privileged Access and Strategies of Pressure', *Political Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 4; R. Braunstein, (2012) 'Storytelling in Liberal Religious Advocacy', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 51, No. 1.

- Segmentation of the political elite and conflicts in the bureaucratic environment. Powerful competing groups, parties, individual politicians and officials can rely on external interests to seek their support;
- The desire to attract non-political groups to solve the problem issue, in order to minimise additional tension and avoid political controversy;
- Getting relevant information and mutual support.⁴

Inside lobbying as a strategy is understood *qua* activities that aim directly at policy-makers.⁵ Such lobbying actions, as a rule, do not attract public attention; they are not reflected in the media and are not noticeable to a wide audience. Inside lobbying can include various tactical decisions: from direct face-to-face meetings to phone calls and contacts via email and instant messenger applications. The main thing is that direct access to policy-makers is carried out by means of communication channels that are inaccessible or restricted to other actors. The key characteristic of this strategy is the mutually beneficial exchange, understood in market terms, between a group of interests and decision-makers or the government as a whole. Authorities provide groups with the opportunity to influence public policy by receiving in return any resources (e.g., knowledge, expertise, membership, compliance, and consent).⁶

In the case of religious organisations, at first glance, support from their followers is the most obvious resource. Even if religious organisations cannot guarantee their believers will be loyal to an individual candidate or party (which is unlikely in the political landscape of modern democracies), they can offer the political actors access to a unique audience where common religious identity can be almost the only unifying feature. In addition, if there is a developed church infrastructure, a religious organisation can be a useful ally or significant opponent during the electoral campaign. However, the resources of a religious organisation are not limited to its electoral capabilities. It should be borne in mind that well established churches have significant influence on the economic and social sphere, acting as a beneficiary or co-owner of economic enterprises and a founder of socially significant or-

⁴ Maloney, 'Interest Groups' 36-37.

⁵ I. de Bruycker and J. Beyers, (2019) 'Lobbying Strategies and Success: Inside and Outside Lobbying in European Union Legislative Politics', *European Political Science Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1.

⁶ J. Beyers, R. Eising, and W. Maloney, (2008) 'Researching Interest Group Politics In Europe and Elsewhere: Much We Study, Little We Know?', *West European Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 6; J. Richardson, (2000) 'Government, Interest Groups and Policy Change', *Political Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 5.

ganisations (e.g., hospitals, schools, universities, colleges, charitable foundations, and orphanages). At the local level, one or several religious organisations may turn out to be the most significant stakeholder(s), regardless of its/their religious component, simply as the largest business entity/-ies on which the vast majority of the social infrastructure of the local community is concentrated.⁷ Do not forget the value of the religious factor if the policy-maker belongs to the same denomination as the religious interest group.

With effective church leadership able to establish and maintain ties with the legitimate elite, the organisation's chances of realising its own interests increase. At the same time, though, in modern political science, there remains an open question about how much policy-makers' religious views influence their decisions, the position of a religious leader who represents the same religion as the person who makes a decision may have a psychological or moral-ethical influence on him or her.⁸ Moreover, religious leaders and their publicly voiced position influence the legitimisation or the de-legitimisation of political initiatives, in the formulation of which politicians allow religious argumentation, which is typical, for example, of the US. This value increases in religious systems with a hierarchical system of governance, where the positions of hierarchs are inevitably interpreted as the position of the whole organisation, which is characteristic of Catholicism and autocephalous Orthodox churches.⁹

In a practical sense, inside lobbying of religious organisations manifests itself in church hierarchs or a church representative having direct contacts with policy-makers. Religious leaders have a significant advantage over other non-commercial and commercial interest groups. They can meet with decision-makers without arousing suspicion not only in 'government territory', but also in church institutions. A private visit to a church by a politician or official can always be explained by his religious, and not political, motives and needs.

Thus, in the case of the insider strategy, the Catholic or Orthodox bishop, who heads the resource-secured diocese, communicates with the authorities not just as

⁷ M. Oyakawa, (2015) 'Turning Private Pain into Public Action: The Cultivation of Identity Narratives by a Faith-Based Community Organization', *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 38, No. 4.

⁸ D. Yamane and E.A. Oldmixon, (2006) 'Religion in the Legislative Arena: Affiliation, Salience, Advocacy, and Public Policymaking', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 3.

⁹ H. Bedford-Strohm, (2008) 'Poverty and Public Theology: Advocacy of the Church in Pluralistic Society', *International Journal of Public Theology*, Vol. 2, No 2.

one of the leaders of the religious community, but also as a significant local stakeholder, influencing the local agenda and often ensuring the functioning of a substantial part of social infrastructure, and in some cases, the economy of the region. In addition, congressional testimonies, which are less closed, are also examples of this strategy.

Outside lobbying

Outside lobbying is often presented as a less effective alternative to an insider strategy, accessible to less successful and less significant stakeholders, who are denied access to direct communication in the decision-making process. However, given that insider groups also resort to this strategy, it is more expedient to consider outside lobbying as an independent strategy often used in combination with inside lobbying. Outsider strategies rely on shaping public opinion in the interests of the group by means of appeals via the media and various forms of mobilising its members; from letters and petitions to rallies, demonstrations, and other political actions aimed at attracting the attention of politicians, media, and the general public.¹⁰ Outside lobbying can take the form of a conference on the subject of a lobbied issue, press releases, official statements, media interviews, public campaigning, social media advertising, protest events etc.¹¹

A key feature of this strategy is its reliance on grassroots lobbying. Like other interest groups, religious organisations rely on their own network of loyal members and associated organisations to put pressure on members of parliament or representatives of the executive or municipal authorities. Demonstrating the public activity of their organisation of interest groups, they seek, through outside pressure, to influence public opinion on key issues of the current agenda. When a religious interest group manages to demonstrate its ability to influence the media information agenda and shape public opinion, this indirectly influences policy-makers. A classic example of outside strategy and grassroots lobbying are letters from voters to their representatives in parliament or collective meetings of ordinary representatives of the organisation with policy-makers during the so-called lobbying days or in their local offices.

¹⁰ C. Wilcox, (2016) 'Toward a Theory of Religious Coalitions, Politics and Religion', Vol. 9, No2.

¹¹ I.D. Loshkariov, (2017) 'Resources of Ethic Lobbying in US Foreign Policy: Theoretical Aspects', *Mirovaya Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya*, Vol. 61, No 3 [in Russian].

Recently, the importance of events aimed at attracting the attention of the media has increased, and the very fact that letters or petitions have been handed over becomes, primarily, the reason for launching a media campaign. Successful campaigns do not necessarily imply a massive mobilisation of supporters. An interest group may rely on public figures who are likely to attract media attention or have direct access to decision makers. Certain religious groups with a developed system of planning and implementing lobbying campaigns maintain lists of key contacts that can be promptly involved in an information campaign in support of or against any initiative.¹² Sometimes a popular musician or writer tweeting on Twitter or posting on Facebook, after being asked by a parish priest to whom he goes to confession and communion, may be more effective than a rally in Central Park. Large stakeholders have advantages within the framework of this strategy. Public statements and interviews with church leaders of major religious organisations have always attracted media attention.¹³ Statements by Catholic bishops of the US are always reflected in the press, and vivid speeches by hierarchs in Russia, Greece, Cyprus, and other countries with a predominant Orthodox population do not go unnoticed. In addition to inside lobbying, the development of the church infrastructure and the presence of a network of affiliated organisations play a role.¹⁴ Policy-makers have to pay attention to the opinion of the leaders of religious colleges, hospitals, charitable foundations and other institutions that are significant for the life of the local community, even if such opinion is expressed not directly, but through the media.

Framing

An important tactical move by religious organisations in the implementation of both inside and outside lobbying strategies is framing. In western democracies, religious groups tend to increase the effectiveness of influencing public policy by transforming their religious demands into more mainstream secular frames.¹⁵ This allows them to attract a wider audience and to protect themselves from accusa-

¹² See R. B. Fowler, *Religion and Politics in America : Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices*. 4th edn. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010).

¹³ J. Lynch, (1990) 'Marketing and the Religious Right: An Application of the Parallel Political Marketplace Conceptualization,' *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, Vol, 9, No1.

¹⁴ J.A. Wright, (2015) 'With Whose Voice and What Language?: Public Theology in a Mediated Public', *International Journal of Public Theology*, Vol, 9 No. 2.

¹⁵ C. Braun-Poppelaars and M. Hanegraaff, 'Conceptualizing Religious Advocacy: Religious Interest Groups and the Process of Public Policy Making', in *Religious Actors in the Public Sphere*, eds J. Haynes and A. Hennig (London: Routledge, 2013).

tions of trying to impose on society a vision of the problem that has been solely influenced by their own religious views. In the simplest form, for example, in anti-abortion campaigns, they replace the conviction of ‘infanticide’ with ‘protecting the life of unborn’, or present euthanasia not as a sin but as inhumane obligation for doctors forced to perform such an act. More complex framing options involve rationalising the argument and searching for non-religious reasons for supporting or opposing an initiative. Thus, the congressional testimonies of Catholic bishops in the US, as a rule, rely on bulk accompanying materials, including not only references to the teachings of the Church, but also survey data related to the issue, statistical information, forecasts of the situation, and alternative proposals formulated from the standpoint of common civil interests – not only of the Catholic Church.¹⁶

The USCCB

In the US, Catholic interest groups rely on insider strategies. The USCCB uses the group resources of the Catholic Church to exchange them for public policy decisions. Historically, the Catholic Church has a unique experience of interaction with political power and has a deep scholastic tradition of reflection on statecraft.¹⁷ The developed theological and canonical rationale for promoting their own interests in the political arena gives the Catholic Church a significant advantage over other religious organisations, since there is no need for Catholics to explain the permissibility of their own lobbying actions to believers and hierarchs. In the US, the Roman Catholic Church began to build its own lobbying institutions at the end of the 19th century, and with the formation of the National Catholic Welfare Conference after the First World War, which later transformed into the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, the lobbying activities of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) are carried out on an ongoing basis. In addition to well-established ties and years of communication with policy-makers, the Catholic Church is distinguished by a unique strategic position in terms of building potential political alliances. The modern Catholic Church has lined up relations with both Democrats and Republicans. Catholic voters represent the largest group of undecided citizens who do not have a constant party attachment.¹⁸ On a number of significant issues on the church agen-

¹⁶ S. Goldzwig and G. Cheney, (1984) ‘The US Catholic Bishops on Nuclear Arms: Corporate Advocacy, Role Redefinition, and Rhetorical Adaptation’, *Communication Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1.

¹⁷ See P. Stamatov, (2010) ‘Activist Religion, Empire, and the Emergence of Modern Long-Distance Advocacy Networks’, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 75, No. 4.

¹⁸ J.M. Wilson (ed.), *From Pews to Polling Places: Faith and Politics in the American Religious Mo-*

da, RCC finds support from both Republicans and Democrats. With Democrats, Catholics have a close understanding of the issues of welfare spending, labour laws, civil rights, and the death penalty, and with Republicans, the position on abortion, parental choice options in education etc. Moreover, the church is trying not to attach an exclusive importance to any of these issues in its agenda, so as not to create preferences for any of the parties.¹⁹

Given the clear institutional structure and hierarchical organisation of the church, Catholic bishops can afford to speak on behalf of all Catholics, representing a consolidated position even in cases of disagreement within the Catholic community. The USCCB can initiate direct contacts to discuss a specific issue on several levels at once: cardinals can hold meetings at the White House, bishops will meet with congressional representatives, and heads of dioceses or parish priests with representatives of a particular state.²⁰ In addition to institutional experience, the USCCB relies on extensive resources. The RCC is increasing its presence in the US both in terms of the number of followers and in terms of its involvement in social infrastructure. For example, 29,9 million people were treated in Catholic hospitals in 1974, and 90,6 million in 2016.²¹ During this time, the value of services provided by Catholic Charities increased from 361 million to USD3,1 billion.²² The inclusion of Catholics in the political elite of the US is also increasing. Compared with 1961, the number of Catholics in the US Congress (2017-2018) increased from 19% to 31%.²³ The position of the RCC in the executive branch is also being strengthened. During Obama's presidency, more than one-third of the members of his administration were Catholic. In the same period, other Catholics serving in his administration were the Vice President, Obama's second-term chief of staff, his national security adviser, his homeland security adviser, the three successive speakers of the House of Representatives, the Democratic leader of the House, the director of

saic (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2007) 44.

¹⁹ K.R den Dulk and E. Oldmixon (eds.), *Mediating Religion and Government: Political Institutions and the Policy Process* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, Springer) 59-82.

²⁰ K.E. Heyer, *Prophetic and Public: The Social Witness of US Catholicism* (Washington, DC; Georgetown University Press, 2006).

²¹ Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 'Frequently Requested Church Statistics', available at <https://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>

²² *Ibid.*

²³ S. Sandstrom, 'Faith on the Hill: The Religious Composition of the 115th Congress', *Pew Research Center* (3 January 2017), available online at <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/01/03/faith-on-the-hill-115/>

the CIA, the director and the deputy director of the FBI, the army chief of staff, the commandant of the Marine Corps, and the chief of staff of the US Air Force.²⁴

The US Catholic Church also actively resorts to outside strategies, enhancing the effect of its lobbying campaigns. Although its congregation in the US does not belong to easily mobilised groups, the church uses its network structures to inform believers at the diocesan and parish levels about government actions of importance and their call to action, such as writing letters or making calls to congressmen. During the healthcare debate in 2009-2010, the bishops sent bulletin insets to be distributed in Catholic churches throughout the US.²⁵ The number of ministers of the church, Catholic organisations and structures affiliated with the church is such that Catholics can launch large-scale public campaigns without the participation of parishioners.

A striking example of the use of the Roman Catholic Church in the US is the combined lobbying strategy campaign in 2011 and 2012 against budget proposals of House Budget Committee chair, Republican Paul Ryan. The USCCB involved both direct contacts with policy-makers and official appeals²⁶ as well as grass-roots mobilisation and coalition interaction. On 14 February 2011, more than 300 Catholic leaders took the bishops' message to Capitol Hill in a day of visits to their US representatives and senators.²⁷ On 8 July 2011, representatives of USCCB met with the House Budget Committee chairperson Paul Ryan and the staff of House Speaker John Boehner, and on 20 July an interfaith delegation including Bishop Ricardo Ramirez of La Cruces, New Mexico, member of the USCCB committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, met with President Obama.²⁸

²⁴ M. Graziano, *In Rome We Trust: The Rise of Catholics in American Political Life* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2017).

²⁵ A.M. Cammisa and P.C. Manuel, (2016) 'Religious Groups as Interest Groups: The United States Catholic Bishops in the Welfare Reform Debate of 1995–1996 and the Health Care Reform Debate of 2009–2010', *Religions*, Vol. 7, No. 2.

²⁶ See United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Letter to United States House of Representatives (6 March 2012), available at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/federal-budget/upload/Letter-to-Congress-Federal-Budget-2012-03-06.pdf>.

²⁷ 'Put the Poor First in Federal Budget Decisions Say Catholic Bishops, CRS President', *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* (15 February 2011), available at <http://www.usccb.org/news/2011/11-032.cfm>.

²⁸ 'USCCB Meets with President, Congressional Leaders to Urge Protection for the Poor in Debt Agreement', *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* (21 July 2011), available online at <http://www.usccb.org/news/2011/11-144.cfm>.

Meetings with policy-makers were accompanied by a series of public events within the framework of the inter-confessional lobby group ‘The Circle of Protection’. One of the most striking elements of the campaign was the ‘Nuns on the Bus: Nuns Drive for Faith, Family, and Fairness’ campaign,²⁹ organised by the Catholic social justice lobby NETWORK. During the campaign, 14 nuns drove on a campaign bus through nine states. The campaign received wide media coverage, and the practice of the ‘monastic campaign bus’ is now used by the Catholic Church annually. For example, in the autumn 2018, ‘Nuns on the Bus’ conducted a regular tour ‘to expose the lies and tell the truth about the harmful effects of the 2017 tax vote – and to hold congressional Republicans accountable for voting in favour of a disastrous tax law’. A wide range of events was held during the tour, from lobby visits, rallies and roundtables, to bus singing.³⁰ It is noteworthy that the participating nuns were chosen to represent the maximum possible number of states through which they travelled.

In terms of the use of frames, the Catholic Church in the US seeks to build its lobbying campaigns using positively coloured vocabulary and detailed, rational argumentation, minimising purely religious arguments. In particular, Shannon Scottee analysed the frames used by religious lobbying groups during the campaign against Ryan’s budget proposals, and found that the Catholic Church used minimal moral and ethical assessments. Only 7% of budget-related documents that were written by Catholics used a moral/immoral frame. During the campaign, Catholic groups used mainly prognostic frames and suggested policy solutions that legislators should consider, particularly the need to increase revenues.³¹

The Church of Cyprus

The Cypriot Orthodox Church is in many ways unique for modern democracies as an example of historical involvement in the political process. The statehood of the Republic of Cyprus is inextricably linked to the church, which has become a catalyst for self-determination of the people of Cyprus and the formation of an independent State. Archbishop Makarios III not only laid the ideological foundation of the

²⁹ ‘Nuns on the Bus 2012’, *Network Lobby for Catholic Social Justice*, available online at <https://networklobby.org/nunsonthebus/bus2012/>.

³⁰ ‘Nuns on the Bus 2018 Route’, *Network Lobby for Catholic Social Justice*, available at <https://networklobby.org/bus2018/events/>

³¹ S. Scottee, (2015) ‘Forming a “Circle of Protection”: Christian Activism and the Budget’, *Interest Groups & Advocacy*, Vol. 4, No. 2.

Republic but also headed the State-building process, winning the first presidential election in 1959. Until 1974, Makarios III simultaneously headed the Cyprus Orthodox Church and the Republic of Cyprus, acting as an *ethnarch* – the religious and political leader of the Cypriots.³² During this period, the situation in Cyprus was non-standard in terms of promoting religious interests: there was no need for the church to defend its point of view before the secular authorities, since the church authority was at the centre of the decision-making system. During the 19th and 20th centuries, the Cyprus Orthodox Church remained the only endogenous institution uniting Cypriots and was able to convert its symbolic, mobilisation and organising role into practically unlimited political capital. The participation of laypeople in the selection of the Archbishop and other bishops gave additional political legitimacy to the ecclesiastical institutions. This practice extended to all ecclesiastical elections in the 20th century and became one of the key factors for the inclusion of the Church in the political life of the island.³³

The interpenetration of church and State at the initial stage of the existence of the Republic predetermined the priority of the insider model for the organisation of church lobbying activities. Like the Roman Catholic Church in the US, the Church of Cyprus uses its accumulated institutional experience, political influence, and resources to build direct communication with policy-makers. A common feature of the RCC in the US and the Orthodox Church of Cyprus is the presence of a developed economic and social infrastructure. Despite the loss of some assets in the northern part of Cyprus, the Church remains one of the largest owners of land, hotels, banks, the media, and other commercial assets.³⁴ The choice of insider strategy is also affected by the position of key groups within the church hierarchy. Studies of intra-church factions show that the so-called *ethnarchikoi* occupy dominant positions among the episcopate of the Cyprus Church, a group that supports active participation in politics and building up the necessary resources, including economic ones.³⁵

³² A. Varnava and M.N. Michael (eds.), *The Archbishops of Cyprus in the Modern Age: The Changing Role of the Archbishop-Ethnarch, Their Identities and Politics* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013).

³³ P.M. Kitromilides, (1980) 'An Unexplored Case of Political Change: A Research Note on the Electoral History of Cyprus', *Επιθεώρηση Κοινωνικών Ερευνών* [Social Research Review], Vol. 38, 187-190.

³⁴ See V. Roudometof, (2013) 'The Church of Cyprus Transition into the 21st Century', *Thetis: Mannheimer Beiträge zur Klassischen Archäologie und Geschichte Griechenlands und Zyperns*, Vol. 20.

³⁵ M. Sarris, (2010) 'Organization and Divisions in the Orthodox Church in Cyprus', *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 22, No. 2.

An example of the insider lobbying of the Church of Cyprus is the struggle to keep in force the 1971 agreement on State co-financing of the wages of a portion of the clergy. According to media reports, the State's spending on subsidising the salaries of priests in 2018 amounted to EUR6,75 million, EUR6,8 million planned for 2019, and should reach EUR7 million by 2020.³⁶ Since 1983 (the data from 1971, when the agreement was concluded, until 1983 are unavailable), the State transferred to the Church EUR 123,7 million to subsidise priests' salaries.³⁷ In early 2013, the government of Dimitris Christofias decided to reduce the subsidy by 15% and initiated a discussion of revising the entire agreement with the church. However, after Nicos Anastasiades, who was supported by the Church, won the presidential elections in February of the same year, the direct intervention of the Archbishop made it possible to cancel the decision to reduce the subsidies and to block discussion on revising the agreement.³⁸

At the local level, the church also relies on direct non-public contacts. In 2007, Archbishop Chrysostomos II asked the Municipal Council of Nicosia for permission to build a new cathedral in the historic centre of the city. Despite active public outcry and a negative review of the project by the Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber,³⁹ the church's direct contacts with municipal deputies led to it obtaining a building permit.⁴⁰

Unlike the Catholic Church in the US, the Church of Cyprus uses financial lobbying tools. If, in the US, there is a direct ban on the financing of parties, candidates and their election campaigns by religious organisations, Cyprus law does not regulate this issue. Taking advantage of the lack of institutional constraints, the Church of Cyprus and its affiliated organisations provide financial support to a wide range of political forces, including the AKEL Communist Party.⁴¹

³⁶ E. Hazou, 'Green Light for Transfer of Church Land to the Dstate', *Cyprus Mail* (8 January 2019), available at <https://cyprus-mail.com/2019/01/08/green-light-for-transfer-of-church-land-to-the-state/>.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ 'State Continues to Pay Priests' Wages', *Cyprus Mail* (22 January 2014), available at <https://cyprus-mail.com/2014/01/22/state-continues-to-pay-priests-wages/>.

³⁹ The official technical consultant of the State and the professional body of all Cypriot mechanics.

⁴⁰ A. Emilianides, C. Adamides, and E. Eftychiou, (2011) 'Allocation of Religious Space in Cyprus', *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 23, No.1.

⁴¹ A. Emilianides, 'The Mutual Role of Religion and the State in Cyprus', *The Mutual Role of Religion and the State in Europe*, ed. B. Schanda (Trier: European Consortium for State and Church Research, 2014).

Compared to the USCCB, the Orthodox Church of Cyprus has limited resort to outside lobbying. Controlling a significant part of the Cypriot media space, the church does not feel the need for additional tools to attract media attention, having direct access to the main communication channels.⁴² The church, of course, issues press releases and official statements, but they, as well as public speeches of the hierarchs, are more likely informational. This activity of the church is primarily oriented not towards arguing and explaining the position but only towards voicing it. In this case, church hierarchs tend to use harsh religious vocabulary. For example, in 2004, the Bishop of Kyrenia told Greek Cypriots that those who voted during the referenda for a plan to reunite the island, proposed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, would not go to heaven.⁴³

Aggressive religious framing can also be observed in official statements by the church that accompanied the campaign against the legalisation of abortion. In March 2018, the parliament passed a law decriminalising abortion up to 12 weeks of gestation. This was preceded by several years of lively public discussion, during which the church unsuccessfully tried to prevent the adoption of the bill. In the Synodic Circular on the issues of abortion, the Church of Cyprus has used accusatory vocabulary, stating that the authors of the bill ‘prepared the bill without the required religious and ethnic sensitivity and without due regard to the traditions of our people’.⁴⁴ In their message, the bishops of the Church of Cyprus also expressed bewilderment about the fact that parliamentarians visiting Orthodox churches, plan to pass a law ‘justifying the killings and that detracts from the basic origins of the faith and the human life’.⁴⁵ The text accuses the legislators and others of sin. The circular also emphasises that ‘a pregnant woman who kills the foetus is a murderer’.⁴⁶

The pronounced religious framing is also inherent in the church’s statements against the bill ‘On Legal Recognition of Gender Identity’⁴⁷, which is under public

⁴² See A. Bitonti and P. Harris (eds.), *Lobbying in Europe: Public Affairs and the Lobbying Industry in 28 EU Countries* (London: Springer, 2017) 89-102.

⁴³ Department of State of the USA, *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom* (2009).

⁴⁴ Synodic Circular on the Issue of Abortions (20 March 2016), *Church of Cyprus*, available at <http://churchofcyprus.org.cy/17156>.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ The Legal Recognition of Gender Identity Bill of 2018, *Ministry of Justice and Public Order*, available at <http://www.mjpo.gov.cy/mjpo/MJPO.nsf/All/770B707519F125DCC22582F600446B7E>.

discussion. They suggest that Cypriot citizens can change their gender presented in the documents based on a simple statement about self-identifying with the other sex. The Holy Synod of the Church of Cyprus stated that ‘the sex bestowed by God cannot be a matter of choice’, and such initiatives carry the ‘threat to the survival of the nation’.⁴⁸

For comparison, the Roman Catholic Church in the US points out itself that an important component of its anti-abortion campaign is that the USCCB’s ‘frames its arguments using accessible concepts and constructions that can be brought to bear on moral discourse in a non-confessional environment’.⁴⁹ Thus, American Catholics, for many decades, have chosen to build their rhetoric about abortion based on pro-life arguments in support of the life of an unborn child, and not on murder charges. In this case, the figure of a woman appears in the speeches of the bishops, not as a criminal sinner, but as a person in need of support and protection. For example, the Testimony of United States Catholic Conference on Constitutional Amendments Protecting Unborn Human Life before the Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights of the House Committee on the Judiciary, on 24 March 1976, stated that ‘a permissive abortion policy socially approves and encourages the irresponsibility of those who abandon the woman, and it betrays the woman and her child’.⁵⁰

Concentrating on inside lobbying does not mean a complete rejection of combined strategies, but the key role in lobbying is given to the direct influence on policy-makers, which, in the context of the strategic position of the church, is reasonably considered by their leaders as the most effective. Thus, in 1998, within the framework of an unsuccessful campaign against the decriminalisation of homosexual relations, the church not only sent personal letters to members of parliament, but also organised the umbrella structure, Pancyprian Committee for the Fight against the Decriminalisation of Homosexuality, that united clergy, various

⁴⁸ Announcement of the Church of Cyprus (11 September 2018), available at <http://churchofcyprus.org.cy/45710>.

⁴⁹ Thomas D. Williams L.C., ‘Abortion and Catholic Social Teaching’, *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* (2007), available at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/abortion/upload/Abortion-and-Catholic-Social-Teaching.pdf>

⁵⁰ Testimony of United States Catholic Conference on Constitutional Amendments Protecting Unborn Human Life before the Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights of the House Committee on the Judiciary (24 March 1976), *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, available online at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/abortion/upload/On-Constitutional-Amendment-Protecting-Unborn-Human-Life2.pdf>.

Orthodox movements and organisations. The committee stated that it would keep records of all members of parliament who voted for decriminalisation and would punish them in the ballot.⁵¹ Grassroots lobbying elements were also present in the 2009 campaign to support the construction of a new cathedral in Paphos, during which the Church relied on the support of civil society groups, namely the 'Initiative Group in favour of the erection of the Cathedral' and 'Human and Environment', which used a non-standard framework for the development of the urban environment for the Church of Cyprus, noting the positive effects of the construction of a cathedral to preserve the fading city park.⁵² It is worth noting that, in contrast to the Nicosia case, the building permit in Paphos was never obtained.

Discussion

Both religious interest groups rely on insider strategies in their lobbying activities. Institutional experience and resource security allow the Catholic bishops of the US and the Orthodox Church of Cyprus to convey their views directly to policy-makers. They play on situational coincidence of interests with various political parties, avoiding permanent and exclusive alliances that, in the long run, may limit the possibility of realising their own interests.

Nevertheless, there are significant differences in the use of outside lobbying and framing between Catholics in the US and the Orthodox Church in Cyprus. While the USCCB pays enough attention to building combined inside/outside strategies and tends to use frames acceptable to a wide audience, the Church of Cyprus does not pay due attention to these issues. The Catholic Church in the US exists in an open religious market and competes with other religious organisations for believers and resources. This leaves an imprint on the positioning and self-perception of the church hierarchy, pushing it towards larger and more comprehensive lobbying campaigns that can confirm, in the eyes of policy-makers and society, the status and importance of the organisation. In a competitive religious environment, the goal of a lobbying campaign is not only to achieve the desired political result, but also to demonstrate its own mobilisation capabilities for its followers and representatives of other religions. The media coverage of lobbying activities helps to consolidate the religious group in the information agenda, strengthening its common positions.

⁵¹ See G. Charalambous and C. Christophorou (eds.), *Party-Society Relations in the Republic of Cyprus: Political and Societal Strategies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

⁵² A. Emilianides, C. Adamides, and E. Eftychiou, (2011) 'Allocation of Religious Space in Cyprus', *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 23, No. 1.

In this regard, the Catholic Church, as a rule, accompanies its inside strategies with other tactical decisions, allowing it to achieve the desired information effect.

The Church of Cyprus, however, exists under the conditions of an actual religious monopoly and considers its strategic position to be a self-sufficient condition for launching lobbying campaigns. It can be assumed that the church leadership and bureaucracy are captivated by their own stereotypes about their influence on Cypriot society, extrapolating their historical significance to the current situation. This, in turn, leads to a false conviction that the position of the church itself can shape public opinion, regardless of the method of presenting information and engaging grassroots structures and/or social movements in promoting their interests. The church may support the unification of believers in an effort to help advance its interests, but on its own, it prefers not to contribute to excessive political mobilisation of the flock.

A similar situation can be observed in Russia, where the Russian Orthodox Church, in promoting its interests at the state level, rarely involves wide groups of believers in the process. Preference is given to religious, rather than political mobilisation. For example, the ROC successfully gathers hundreds of thousands of believers for various pilgrimage events and worshipping at shrines. During such occasions, political positions are not voiced. Even so, the mere fact of an episodic concentration of a significant number of citizens around the Church strengthens the image of the hierarchs at meetings behind closed doors within the framework of inside lobbying. In addition, such self-restraint in the use of outsider strategies means they do not have to spend additional efforts on explaining the church's position to various groups of its own followers, as well as on manipulating the possible scale of political mobilisation of the congregation in the eyes of policy-makers.

For autocephalous Orthodox churches, this model seems to be ineffective in the long term. The growing divergence of citizens' political and social agenda from the church (manifested, for example, in attitudes towards abortion), as well as the influence of global trends, require the search for more flexible strategies. This is especially true for the Church of Cyprus, considering that it cannot realise its interests outside the context of the processes taking place in the European Union, whose future is tied to a State in which –if the Cyprus issue is resolved– the religious landscape will cease to be so monolithic. The experience of the Catholic Church in the US can be one of the possible sources for updating the model of lobbying activities of Orthodox churches, including in Cyprus.

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