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Territorial – Political Differentiation of Ukraine: Forming Factors, Contradictions of Ethno-Cultural Relations, Prospects of Social Consolidation

Polarization of political moods in Ukraine, which was particularly evident during the parliamentary elections of the years 2007 and 2012, the 2004 and 2010 presidential elections, revolutionary events in early 2014, has once again brought the issues of territorial and political integrity of the state along with the related problems of Ukrainian identity (ethnic and political) and the choice of geopolitical orientations into focus. In both scientific and journalistic literature there have also appeared many analytical materials (by I. Bekeshkina, O. Maiboroda, L. Nahorna, M. Riabchuk, H. Perepelytsia, V. Khmelko, V. Shyshatskyi, etc.) which have accounted for the situation from different methodological standpoints, along with different political speculations as to the "imminent division" of Ukraine, "civilizational incompatibility" of its regions, etc. And while analysts were trying to understand the cause-and-effect relationship of territorial and political reality, political strategists and politicians tried to use them in fighting for their interests. This also refers to related external political environments, out of which particularly intense mass opinion pressure aims at regaining and strengthening the Soviet identity in Ukraine. This pressure is applied by Russia and aims at the recreation of Soviet political values as a pre-condition for expansion of its geopolitical base and even restoration of the empire within the former USSR.[1]

Since state and political identity of most societies is primarily based on historical and political traditions, in relation to Ukraine it is also important to outline those historical and geographic factors that have shaped the Ukrainian state and that have provided the characteristic features of Ukrainian political self-consciousness and its territorial disparities These peculiarities of the national and political movement for cultural autonomy and independence of Ukraine have

[1] Dnistrianskyy, M.*:* Geopolitychnyi tysk Rosii ta ukrainski perspektyvy (Geopolitical pressure of Russia and the Ukrainian perspectives) In: *Universum*. №11-12, 2010. pp.4-7.

been at the core of its political history over the past two centuries, as well as to the differences in the degree of involvement of the country's regions in that historical and political process.[2] The fact that different parts of Ukraine's territory used to be part of different states having different ideological principles – from the end of the 18th c. to 1917 within the Russian and Austrian (Austro-Hungarian) empires, during the 20s, the 30s of the 20th c. within Poland, Romania, the USSR and Czechoslovakia – also does not contribute to common political identification of the citizens of the state. Unfortunately, even in the period of independence central political elites quite often resorted to provoking regional conflicts. And that device was applied by both central state structures and separate political forces and politicians, who contributed to further popularizing biased historical interpretations. As the result of that, there have been no serious achievements in overcoming historical barriers of mutually negative perceptions.

Thus, Ukrainian state territory is composed of an integrated historical and geographic region. However, along with that, it is an integrated formation based on the area of settlement of the state-shaping Ukrainian ethnic nation that makes up the majority of the state territory of Ukraine.[3] Therefore, Ukraine has got all the objective grounds for becoming an integrated state united by the geographic distribution of the Ukrainian people and its peaceful relations and close ties with other ethnic groups in the peripheral parts of its territory based on preserving the multicultural identity of the regions. However, territorial and consolidation processes in Ukraine both in the late 20th and in the early 21st c. have not been smooth since the Ukrainian ethnic nation remains unconsolidated, due to assimilation and acculturation in the Russian-speaking milieu of the regional groups of the South and East and, in particular, urban settlements. Following the results of the last census of the year 2001 all in all in Ukraine 14.8% of ethnic Ukrainians acknowledged the Russian language to be their native one, and in the urban surroundings the figure was 21.8%, while in the rural settings it was 2.7%. The largest percentage of Ukrainians (mainly those residents settled in regional centres and large cities) assimilated into the Russian-speaking milieu are in the Autonomous Republic of the Crimea (59.5%), Donetsk

[2] Skliarska, O.: *Polityko-geografichni procesy v Zakarpatskii ta Chernivetskii oblastyah*. (Political and geographic processes in Transcarpathia and Chernivtsi oblast) Lviv: LNU imeni Ivana Franka, 2011. p.47.

[3] Dnistrianskyy, M.*: Etnopolitychna geografiya Ukrainy: problemy teoriiї, metodologii, praktyky*. (Ethnopolitical geography of Ukraine: problem theories, methodology and practices) Lviv: LNU imeni Ivana Franka, 2006. p.224.

(58.7%) and Luhansk (49.4%) regions.[4] At the same time the degree of acculturation of ethnic Ukrainians into the Russian-speaking cultural milieu constitutes an indicator of the state of ethnic national self-consciousness for the Ukrainians for whom Russian is a mixed, "Soviet", or regional identity.

Under certain circumstances, the religious factor could improve interregional integration. However, territorial distribution of the religious allegiance and its political significance also confirms the preservation of considerable, historically derived regional discrepancies and the insufficiency of cultural combinations. Of particularly negative geopolitical value is the territorial distribution of Ukrainian orthodoxy and the absence of one, self-governed, Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Therefore, due to all the negative moments in Ukraine during the period of independence, the processes shaping an integral Ukrainian political nation and united state identity have not yet been completed.

Due to the impact of previous historical periods in the formation of the ethnic structure of regions, taking into account a wide range of factors (the proportion of ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic minorities, the population structure by native tongue, degree of assimilation of ethnic and national groups, and electoral geography), the following groups of regions are taken as separate ethnic and geographic sociocultural districts: 1) Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi regions; 2) Volyn-Halychyna area (Volyn, Rivne, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv and Ternopil regions); 3) Podillia-Polissia area (Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Khmelnytskyi regions); 4) Central Right Bank area (Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Cherkasy regions); 5) Central Left Bank area (Poltava, Sumy, Chernihiv regions); 6) Dnipro-Kharkiv area (Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv regions); 7) Donetsk area (Donetsk and Luhansk regions); 8) Odessa area (Odessa region); 9) Central Black Sea area (Mykolaiv and Kherson regions); 10) Crimean area (the Autonomous Republic of the Crimea) (see figure 1).

Chernivtsi and Zakarpattia regions are characteristic ones in this respect, although together they do not form an integral area. Nevertheless, individually they are similar in the features of geopolitical location, historical and geographic preconditions and some special features of ethno-national population structure as well as in public

[4] Natcionalnyi sklad naselennya ta yoho movni oznaky. Za danymy Vseukrainskoho perepysu naselennya 2001 roku. (Ethnic composition of the population and its linguistic features. Based on National census of Ukraine, 2001) K.: Derjavnyi komitet statystyky Ukrainy, 2003. p.104.

and political activity.[5] The ethnic Ukrainian population makes up over 75% of the population, indigenous ethnic minorities (Hungarians, Romanians, and Moldovans) are provided with a cultural and educational infrastructure, however, they are poorly integrated into the general Ukrainian milieu, due to their poor command of Ukrainian. (The Ukrainian language was not studied in minority schools until 1991).

In Zakarpattia the problem of political rusynstvo remains of concern. Its ideology claims that the Ukrainian residents of Zakarpattia region constitute a separate ethnos. Censuses have proved from the very beginning that the percentage of persons among the native Ukrainian residents of Zakarpattia region that identified themselves with rusyns as a separate ethnos is very limited.

This was confirmed by the census of 2001, the methodology of which enabled all Ukrainians willing to identify themselves as a separate people. The results of the census showed that 10,090 persons identified themselves as the representatives of a "separate ethnos". That constitutes less than one per cent of all ethnic Ukrainians of Zakarpattia, and 31% of them also acknowledged Ukrainian to be their native language.[6]

As the monitoring of the latest presidential election and parliamentary elections of Ukraine shows, a considerable administrative effort, which was the result of impacts of current authorities as well as of large financial and business groups, has been perceivable in the electoral and political behaviour of the residents of Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi regions. The support of Ukrainian national democratic forces makes up from 40 to 60% of voters. The support of the Party of Regions, which was the ruling one since 2010 and that combined liberal and pro-Russian ideological principles, varied from 15 to 30%. Some 5% of voters voted for left-wing political parties here.

The Western, Volyn-Halychyna area, embracing five regions (Volyn, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil), is in general more homogenous, and it is distinguished by a high percentage of ethnic Ukrainians (over 95%), a small percentage of ethnic Russians (less than 5%) and Russian-speaking population (less than 4%). Ethnic Russians are scattered mainly in large and middle-sized cities – administrative, industrial and recreational centres. The percentage of urban residents among them exceeds 80%. In the regional centres

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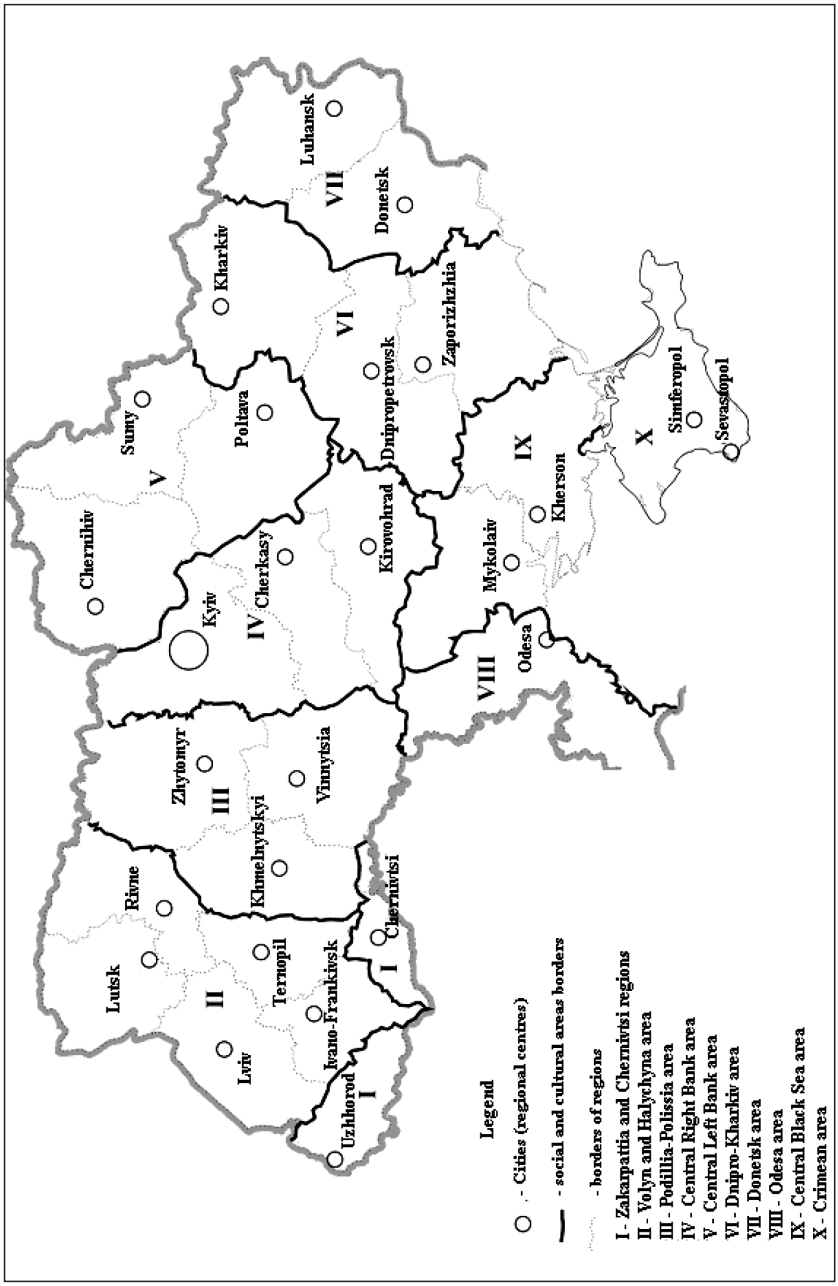
[5] Skliarska, O.: *Polityko-geografichni procesy v Zakarpatskii ta Chernivetskii oblastyah*. op. cit. p.11

[6] Natcionalnyi sklad naselennya ta yoho movni oznaky. (Ethnic composition of the population and its linguistic features. Based on National census of Ukraine, 2001) Uzhgorod: Holovne upravlinnya statystyky v Zakarpatskii oblasti, 2003. p.12.

Figure 1. *Social and cultural areas of Ukraine*



of the area the percentage of ethnic Russians makes up from 3% (in Ternopil) to 8.9% (in Lviv). Here Russians are quite well assimilated into the Ukrainian cultural milieu. From 12 to 20% of them consider Ukrainian to be their native language, and at the same time among those who consider the language of their nationality to be their native language, as compared with other areas, the percentage of those having a fluent command of Ukrainian is quite high. Along with that, the percentage of Russians who were born in Volyn-Halychyna area is small (less than 2% of the whole population born in the area), that being one of the factors of reduction in the sympathy with ethnic Russians and ethnic majority. High degree of self-consciousness of Ukrainian residents has also encouraged higher public activity among ethnic national minorities, which is manifested in the setting-up of a wide network of ethnic national communities. The degree of support of national democratic and nationalistic forces within historical Halychyna makes up from 85 to 90%, and within historical Volyn up to 75 %. Some 10% of residents are ready to support centrist, left-wing and centrist as well as liberal democratic parties. Less than 3% of the population support communist ideology. In Volyn the influence of centrist parties, in particular the ones supported by the administrative factors can achieve 15%.

The Volyn-Halicna area has become one of the leaders in the consolidation of the national state and political nation, because of its high degree of involvement in Ukrainian history and the development of its ethnic cultural environment. However, its poor economic potential along with some objective preconditions considerably reduced its social and economic role in the general state processes. Due to the high degree of identification of the population of the area with the idea of Ukrainian sovereignty, in case state authorities deviate from the principles of constructing Ukraine as a national state, ethnic political riots and conflicts with the central authorities may appear.

The three areas of the central part of Ukraine (Podillia-Polissia, Central Right Bank and Central Left Bank), similarly to the Volyn-Halychyna area, are primary areas of Ukrainian settlement and nation-building. This determines its primarily mono-ethic nature: the percentage of Ukrainians here varies from over 85% (only Sumy region) to some 95% (Vinnytsia). In rural areas the percentage of ethnic Ukrainians exceeds 95%. The percentage of Ukrainians whose native language is Russian is a bit higher here than in Volyn-Halychyna, and it varies in the Right Bank part from 1 to 4%, while in the Left Bank area it reaches 7.6%. However, in general in these three areas the percentage of Ukrainian-speaking residents is a bit less than the percentage of Ukrainians and, what is particularly

indicative of the residents' ethnic and political identification, in all the regions of Podillia-Polissia, Central Right Bank and Central Left Bank areas the percentage of Ukrainians with Russian being their native language is smaller than the percentage of Russians with their native tongue being Ukrainian. Only the city of Kyiv and some industrial cities (Kremenchuk, Shostka) constitute an exemption from that. Though the figures for the majority of indices of ethnic identity of residents of Podillia-Polissia, Central Right Bank and Central Left Bank areas are similar, certain trends in socio-cultural indices (the degree of assimilation of ethnic Ukrainians, electoral behaviour) from the west to the east can be traced. Ethno-national minorities (Jews, Russians) in Podillia-Polissia, Central Right Bank and Central Left Bank areas are mostly settled in a dispersed way (in large administrative and industrial centres). Putylivka district, Sumy region provides an exemption, where there is a slight prevalence in terms of numbers (51.6% Russians and 47.4% Ukrainians) in favour of ethnic Russians. All the three areas of the central part of Ukraine, taking into account both its geographic location, historical importance, and the degree of Ukrainian ethnic political identity, these regions have sufficient grounds to become the core of the consolidation of Ukrainian civic nation based on the principles of national sovereignty and conflict-free development of ethnic political processes. In particular, the area is characterized by a relatively high degree of Ukrainian self-consciousness and, at the same time, a high level of sympathy with the largest ethnic national group – Russians. Therefore, in general the discrepancies in ethnic political development are poorly manifested.

All the central areas of Ukraine are in many ways distinguished for the similarity of voting patterns: on average up to 50% of residents here are ready to support national democratic forces, from 10 to 15 % left-wing centrist ones, and from 5 to 10 % communist ones. The degree of support for national democratic and liberal democratic political forces is a bit higher in the right bank regions, while that of left-wing and left-wing centrist ones in the left bank regions. At this point the readiness to provide support to effective centrist political forces and the ruling party (up to 20%) is evident. In the central part of Ukraine, a special place in the electoral ratios goes to the capital, which is characterized by low electoral activity and noticeable variability of political moods. As compared to the neighbouring regions, in Kyiv a slightly higher level of support of national democratic and liberal democratic forces is possible (up to 50%), that being primarily caused by the concentration of the Ukrainian national intelligentsia. In general, with a view to expanding the constructive influence of

the central socio-cultural areas to the western, eastern and southern regions, the expansion of Ukrainian cultural values remains a goal in regional centres and the uplifting of rural area.

Dnipro-Kharkiv socio-cultural area was inhabited by Ukrainians a bit later than the neighbouring Central Left Bank and Central Right Bank areas. A considerable influence on the formation of identity in that territory and political self-consciousness of its citizens was spurred by economic development through a high level of industrial development and the considerable land resources which constantly stimulated immigration of non-Ukrainian residents. In particular the migration went to large cities, administrative and industrial centres. Thus, according to the 2001 census, 9.6% of residents of Dnipropetrovsk region were born in the territory of Russia. Thus, today the percentage of Ukrainians within this socio-cultural area varies from 70 to 80% in the overall population, from 77% in Zaporizhzhia region to 90.4% in Dnipropetrovsk region. Over the latest period between the censuses the percentage of ethnic Ukrainians here increased by 7.8%, which is considerably higher than the average Ukrainian values. In the city of Kharkiv, in particular, it increased by 10.6%. 22% of all ethnic Russians of Ukraine are focused in the area; their percentage varies from 17.6% in Dnipropetrovsk region to 25.6% in Kharkiv region. The index of quantitative prevalence of ethnic Ukrainians varies from almost 3 in Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv regions to 4.5 in Dnipropetrovsk region. The percentage of Ukrainians who consider the language of their nationality to be their native one makes up on average over 70%. At the same time, in this area the differentiation in language assimilation of Ukrainians between rural and urban residents is more dramatic. Thus, in Kharkiv region only 66.7% of urban Ukrainian residents consider the language of their nationality to be their native language, while in the city of Kharkiv only 50.4%. Along with that, in rural areas the Ukrainian language use is more widespread. 91.8% of Ukrainians residing in villages consider it to be their native in Kharkiv region, though over the period between the censuses an increase in Russification took place in the region. At the same time the percentage of Russians whose native language is Ukrainian is on the rise. All in all, their percentage (4–6%) in the area is higher than the average in Ukraine.

Political-geographic problems of the Kharkiv-Dnipropetrovsk socio-cultural area (Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv regions) are determined not only by its ethno-geographic structure, geopolitical location, but also by a considerable economic, primarily, industrial potential. In spite of the fact that Kharkiv was twice in its history in the centre of Ukrainian national and cultural uplifting

(the 20's, 30's of the 19th c. and the 20's of the 20th c.), and the whole socio-cultural area still preserves, in particular, the memory of Cossacks (those of Sloboda and Zaporizhzhia), still the ethnic political situation here is considerably influenced by its frontier location, the consequences of migration processes, which cause tensions and some threats of rioting in Kharkiv and other regional centres due to granting the Russian language the official status. In rural areas due to the deterioration of the living standards and social dissatisfaction, pro-Soviet ideas are also popular. Opposition of different election campaigns at the same time shows that, having a comparatively low level of support of national democratic political forces, the Dnipro-Kharkiv socio-cultural district can provide considerable support to right liberal and left-wing centrist pro-state political parties.

Eastern, Donetsk area is also almost fully located within the Ukrainian ethnic territory. However, due to its later mass settlement, a considerable impact of migration and assimilation of ethnically Ukrainian population in the course of economic development has produced by today a largely bi-ethnic, Ukrainian-Russian population. In the area reside 34% of all Russians of Ukraine, and of these over 11% were born in the territory of Russia. The percentage of ethnic Ukrainians in the population makes up in general over 57%, and among rural residents some 73%. Correspondingly, the percentage of Russians in the overall population makes up over 38%, and among rural residents it exceeds 20%. Ethnic Russians make up an absolute majority in two administrative districts of the rural area – Krasnodon (51.7%) and Stanytsia Luhanska (61.1%). Native Ukrainian residents according to the 2001 census constitute a minority, only some 27%. Their percentage in the period between the censuses has been reduced by some 5%.

Historical peculiarities of social and economic development have also determined the main ethnic political problems and contradictions of the Donetsk socio-cultural district. Peripheral involvement with the Ukrainian historical political process, strong regional self-consciousness opposed to the general national one, and acculturation of the Ukrainian population are contributing factors, as is the popularity of pro-Soviet ideas, which is supported by the social peculiarities reflecting the background of serious complexities in the economic transformation. The relatively higher level of industrial development of Donetsk region has also resulted in the appearance of powerful financial and industrial groups that over the last years have had the ambition to gain a dominating position in the political system of the entire Ukraine. They have imposed on the Ukrainian society a model of socio-cultural relations formed in the region that could lead to the

intensification of interregional opposition. This was most noticeably manifested in the course of the presidential campaign of the year 2004, which, due to provocations of Russian political strategists, became a generator of the riots in all the newly developed lands (the South and the East of Ukraine). This was driven by the adoption of dual, primarily Russian and Ukrainian citizenship, and the granting of the status of state language to the Russian language.

Due to the strong regional self-consciousness of Donetsk district, the dominant local economic and political elites, which in the latest election here associated with the Party of Regions, took over 70% of votes. Up to 10% of voters support the Bolshevik communist forces. The total support of Ukrainian national democratic and liberal democratic forces is very low (up to 15%). Approximately one-fifth of the Donetsk area directly or indirectly supported the pro-Russian separatists in April 2014.

Separation of Odessa region into a separate socio-cultural area is accounted for by a number of objective factors and, primarily, by the fact that this is the region with the most diverse ethnic mosaic in Ukraine. In spite of the absolute majority of the Ukrainian population according to the census of the year 2001 (62.8%), in the language structure of the region residents with Ukrainian language being their native one make up only a relative majority (less than 50%, however, that is more than the percentage of residents with Russian being their native language). In four out of 26 administrative districts, ethnic groups form the absolute or relative majority: Bulgarians make up an absolute majority in Bolgrad district (60.8%) and relative majority in Artsyz (39.0%) and Tarutyne (37.5%) district, Moldovans make up a relative majority in Reni district (49.0%). Ethnic Ukrainians make up the absolute majority in all the administrative districts but Southern Bessarabia. The degree of command of Ukrainian in the ethnic minorities' milieu is very low. Sociological research by I. Popova conducted in Odessa region testifies that in a large percentage of the population "the Russian language was imposed by the established socio-cultural setting".[7] Thus, the status of the Ukrainian ethnicity in the region, undoubtedly, does not promote the process of consolidation.

Contradictory moments of ethnic political development are mostly focused in the regional centre (Odessa) and in the historical region of Southern Bessarabia. In particular, the historical image of Odessa

[7] Popova, I.: *Mova yak factor polyitychnoho ta kulturnoho samovyznachennya (na materialah sotciolohichnyh doslidjen v Odeskii oblasti)*. [Language as factor of political and cultural self-determination (based on a sociological survey at Odessa oblast)] Etnichni menshyny Shidnoi ta Centralnoi Evropy. K., 1994. p.135

imposed on residents by modern mass media, a widespread historical mythology as components of official ideology of the city and regional elite, which provide little connection of the city with the Ukrainian cultural and political traditions. In the city there are several groups of openly anti-Ukrainian sentiment, among which the *Rodina* party is particularly aggressive.

In two regions (Mykolaiv and Kherson) of the southern, Central Black Sea socio-cultural area, which has been under Ukrainian cultural and political influence over a considerable period of time, and which in the late 18th – early 19th c. finally became a part of Ukrainian ethnic territory, the percentage of Ukrainians according to the 2001 census makes up 82% of the population. Also similar for the two regions are the percentages of Russians (14.1%). The rural population is, as in Ukraine as a whole, more of a monoethnic nature: although there are some settlements or separate communities of ethnic national minorities (Moldovans, Bulgarians and Russians), over 88% of the whole population are ethnic Ukrainians. Among urban residents the percentage of Russians is on average 18%. Only slightly higher is their percentage in regional centres and in the cities of Nova Kakhovka, Pivdennoukrainsk. Contradictions relating to insufficient Ukrainian national identification are also noticeable here, however, the destructive politicization of the residents on the basis of mobilization of regional or Soviet identities has less basis than that in the neighbouring Odesa region. Correspondingly, it is not likely that the conflicts of the whole district with the central authorities will come to the foreground. Kherson region is distinguished among the other southern regions of Ukraine for the strongest support of Ukrainian national democratic parties (up to 30%). The use of administrative resources on behalf of the capital authorities for the sake of ensuring support of centrist parties could be effective here.

The most complicated ethnic political situation that began with the proclamation of the sovereignty of Ukraine escalated in the Crimean region. As compared to general Ukrainian ratios, the region stands out for its absolute majority of ethnic Russian and Russian-speaking population. According to the 2001 census, less than half of the residents of the Crimea (49.1%) were born in the territory of the peninsula, and some 16.1% more in other regions of Ukraine. At the same time, 18.8% of citizens were born in the territory of the Russian Federation and 8.1% in the territory of Uzbekistan.[8] However, over

[8] Naselennya Ukrainy za mistcem narodjennya ta gromadyanstvom. Za danymy Vseukrainskoho perepysu naselennya 2001 roku. (Population of Ukraine acc. to place of birth and citizenship. Based on National census of Ukraine, 2001) K.: Derjavnyi komitet statystyky Ukrainy. K., 2004. p.226

the period between the censuses, the absolute majority of Russians has been reduced considerably: all in all by 11.6%, 10.6% among city residents and by 13.3% among village residents. As a result of rapid population reduction, as well as taking into account drastic increase in the number of Crimean Tatars, the percentage of ethnic Russian population was reduced in the peninsula: in the overall population by 7.3% (from 65.6 to 58.3%), among urban residents by 5.2% (from 71.1 t 65.9%), among rural residents by 9.9% (from 55.7% to 45.8%). The absolute number of ethnic Ukrainians showed a decrease as well: by 9.5% in general and by 5.1% within urban residents, and as much as by 14.9% within rural residents.[9] The return of deported residents contributed to the reduction in the percentage of ethnic Ukrainians by 2.4% in the overall population, by 0.3% with urban and by 6.5% with rural residents. A negative factor in the course of ethnic political processes is also a considerable degree of assimilation and acculturation of ethnic Ukrainian residents that prevents them from performing cultural integration and state consolidation functions.

One of the generators of the appearance of such contradictions was the activation of a whole range of legal and illegal Russian political unions in an openly anti-Ukrainian direction, and Russia's annexation of the peninsula in March 2014 also actively contributed to the phenomenon. The fact that the relatively largest proportion of residents born in Russia lives here and that they represent mainly an ideologized strata of the society (military, party nomenclature) does not contribute to the perception of the idea of an independent Ukraine for the ethnic Russians of the Crimean region. Total support of Ukrainian national democratic forces reached 13–15%, and still that was mainly due to the electoral activity of the Crimean Tatars.

The Crimea has a characteristic range of problems relating to the return of deported residents and their integration into the Ukrainian cultural and political settings, the main aspects of which are as follows: a) social and economic ones (employment, settlement and provision with dwelling space, allocation of land plots); b) political and legal (representation of the Crimean Tatars in the administration, the status of the Crimean Tatar people and their representation); c) geocultural (meeting educational, religious needs, command of the Ukrainian language, religious and political ideology of some Crimean Tatar groups, in particular the spread of Islamic fundamentalism).

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[9] Natcionalnyi sklad naselennya ta yoho movni oznaky. Za danymy Vseukrainskoho perepysu naselennya 2001 roku. (Ethnic composition of the population and its linguistic features. Based on National census of Ukraine, 2001) K.: Derjavnyi komitet statystyky Ukrainy, 2003. p.112-118.

As a conclusion, there are enough objective preconditions for the shaping of the new Ukrainian political identity in combination with the preservation of regional identities and a deepening of territorial and political consolidation of the Ukrainian society. However, at the same time the state faces too many factors of interregional alienation created either by way of a purposeful destructive activity, or by cynical inactivity. Therefore, the negative consequences of a durable policy of provoking interregional conflicts which was conducted in the Soviet period and also in the recent times, along with the insufficiency of current steps aimed at strengthening regional contacts are obvious. Mass media does not bring into focus all the moments of historical, cultural and geographic unity of regions with the core of the country. As a consequence of that, the question remains unanswered whether Ukrainian society will be able to use its favourable objective preconditions for the political consolidation of the state, or there will be a social will to implement all the advantages that neutralize negative elements.

However, some positive elements can also be noted in regional and political trends. First of all, in Ukraine objective natural processes of citizens' self-organization on the principles of patriotism, the need to preserve integrity as well as national cultural identity have been taking place. The understanding of the fact that Soviet identity and independent Ukraine are incompatible objectives is being formed as well, though very slowly. Also, a certain potential of public counteraction to the expansionism on behalf of Russia is perceptible, too.[10]

Finally, let us state that the elimination of actual threats to territorial and political integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine as well as the creation of favourable internal and external political preconditions for its consolidation will depend not only on the Ukrainian political system, but also on a more effective self-organization of responsible citizens of all regions on the basis of general national interests. To overcome historical regional and mental alienation it is also important to bridge different regional perceptions of the Ukrainian historical process. Removing the manifestations of antagonism and supporting the manifestations of sympathy and mutual understanding is a first prerequisite.

[10] Dnistrianskyy, M.: *Geopolitychnyi tysk Rosii ta ukrainski perspektyvy* op. cit. p.7