

Article

THE ETHNIC STRUCTURE OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY AS A FACTOR IN THE FORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE

La estructura étnica de la sociedad ucraniana como factor en la formación de la identidad nacional y el desarrollo sostenible del Estado

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Abstract: The purpose of the study is to analyze the ethnic structure of Ukrainian society as a factor influencing national identity and sustainable state development under modern transformations. The research applies an interdisciplinary approach combining theories of social cohesion, intergroup relations, and civic identity formation. The methodology includes structural-functional, comparative analysis, as well as the synthesis of sociological data. The findings show that the war accelerated the transformation of Ukrainian national identity from an ethnocultural to a predominantly civic model, strengthening cohesion among ethnic groups. High-quality intergroup relations, inclusive state policy, trust building identified as key mechanisms for reducing ethnic differences and enhancing state resilience. The study proves that ethnic diversity, supported by effective institutions and dialogue, contributes to human capital development and stability. The scientific novelty lies in conceptualizing ethnic diversity as a strategic resource of resilience rather than fragmentation and substantiating the role of institutional inclusiveness in identity transformation. The practical significance of the study reflected in its applicability to inclusive public policies aimed at strengthening national unity and supporting post-war reconstruction. It concluded that civic nation based on shared values, equal rights, and inclusiveness is essential for transforming ethnic diversity into a strategic asset for sustainable development.

Keywords: Ethnic structure, National identity, Social cohesion, Multiculturalism, Sustainable development, Political nation, Intercultural tolerance, Ukraine.

Resumen: El objetivo de este estudio es analizar la estructura étnica de la sociedad ucraniana como factor que influye en la identidad nacional y el desarrollo estatal sostenible en el contexto de las transformaciones modernas. La investigación aplica un enfoque interdisciplinario que combina teorías de cohesión social, relaciones intergrupales y formación de la identidad cívica. La metodología incluye análisis estructural-funcional y comparativo, así como la síntesis de datos sociológicos recientes. Los resultados muestran que la guerra aceleró la transformación de la identidad nacional ucraniana, pasando de un modelo etnocultural a uno predominantemente cívico, lo que fortaleció la cohesión entre los grupos étnicos. Se identifican las relaciones intergrupales sólidas, las políticas estatales inclusivas y la construcción de confianza como mecanismos clave para reducir las diferencias étnicas y mejorar la resiliencia del Estado. El estudio demuestra que la diversidad étnica, respaldada por instituciones eficaces y el diálogo intercultural, contribuye al desarrollo del capital humano y la estabilidad social. La novedad científica radica en conceptualizar la diversidad étnica como un recurso estratégico de resiliencia, en lugar de un factor de fragmentación, y en fundamentar el papel de la

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inclusividad institucional en los procesos de transformación de la identidad. La relevancia práctica del estudio se refleja en su aplicabilidad a políticas públicas inclusivas destinadas a fortalecer la unidad nacional y apoyar la reconstrucción de posguerra. Concluye que una nación cívica basada en valores compartidos, igualdad de derechos e inclusividad institucional es esencial para transformar la diversidad étnica en un activo estratégico para el desarrollo sostenible.

Palabras clave: Estructura étnica, Identidad nacional, Cohesión social, Multiculturalismo, Desarrollo sostenible, Nación política, Tolerancia intercultural, Ucrania.

1. Introduction.

Ukraine's multiethnic composition has long played a critical role in shaping national identity, social cohesion, and state development. In the context of globalization and ongoing political challenges, understanding the dynamics of ethnic structure is essential for ensuring sustainable national integration.

The ethnic structure of Ukrainian society is a complex and dynamic factor that profoundly influences the processes of national identity formation and the sustainable development of the state. For decades, the country's multinational composition - a legacy of varied historical, political, and cultural influences - has been a defining characteristic. Contemporary scientific research highlights a pivotal shift: the full-scale Russian aggression has become a powerful catalyst, accelerating the decolonization of the socio-cultural space and fostering an unprecedented civic-political consolidation of the Ukrainian nation, often transcending traditional ethnic lines.

The modern Ukrainian state, having affirmed its independence in 1991, faces the crucial task of constructing a unified national identity that transcends purely ethnic boundaries. The country's ethnic structure is complex, historically shaped by various empires and characterized by the co-existence of Ukrainians (as the titular nation) and numerous national minorities, including Russians, Belarusians, Crimean Tatars, Hungarians, Romanians, Poles, and others. This diversity presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge lies in preventing ethnic differences from becoming factors of internal fragmentation or external manipulation. The opportunity is the potential to build a resilient, strong political nation rooted in shared civic values and commitment to the sovereign state.

This article examines the ethnic structure of Ukrainian society as a fundamental factor influencing two interconnected macro-processes: the formation of a consolidated national identity and the sustainable development of the state. We will explore how theoretical concepts of social cohesion and intergroup tolerance, often applied to immigrant societies, are relevant and must be adapted for analyzing relationships among historical co-resident groups in Ukraine.

2. Theoretical foundations.

2.1. Ethnic structure: social cohesion and solidarity.

According to the data of the only All-Ukrainian Census of 2001, during the 1990s, the share of the titular nation, Ukrainians, increased significantly from 72.7% during the last Soviet census of 1989 to 77.8%, which was the result of both mass repatriation and the restoration of national identity. The traditional ethnic structure of Ukraine, based on the last comprehensive census in 2001, showed a significant majority of Ukrainians (77.8%) with substantial representation from national minorities (22.2%).

As of today, the actual current distribution is significantly altered due to the occupation of territories since 2014 and 2022, forced migration, and refugee outflows, leading to a substantial decrease in the total population of Ukraine-controlled areas.

Recent sociological surveys from 2024 provide a snapshot of contemporary self-identification trends, revealing a powerful trend towards national unity despite ethnic origin (Razumkov Centre's, 2024):

- Primary identity implies that the vast majority of respondents identify as citizens of Ukraine (up to 79%), emphasizing a civic rather than purely ethnic foundation for identity.
- Regarding ethnic self-identification, the majority of respondents identify themselves as ethnically Ukrainian (94%), which indicates a high level of self-identification with the titular group in the context of external threat.
- For a sense of belonging, the consistently high percentage of citizens, regardless of ethnic origin, feel a strong sense of belonging to the Ukrainian people (95% in the East, 96% in the South, 98% in the Center, and 97% in the West, according to 2025 survey data).

In Ukraine, there is a perception that there are significant cultural differences between individual regions of Ukraine. However, despite internal and external differences, Ukrainians consider themselves related enough to live in the same country (60%) (Slyusarevsky, 2015).

The complication of the ethnocultural structure of society can be positive, contributing to the mutual enrichment of cultures and the common good, but it can also lead to negative consequences - a conflict of values, cultural norms, and a violation of social unity. Under such conditions, the requirements for the state's ethnopolicy will naturally increase (Malinovska, 2023).

Social cohesion reflects the level of solidarity and interconnectedness among groups and members of those groups in society. It is based on a sense of belonging to a community, which is the result of social identification with it.

Social cohesion, broadly defined as the strength of relationships and unity between different groups of citizens, as well as between citizens and institutions, is a fundamental element of a nation's stability and development. It is often referred to as the "glue" that holds a society together. It refers to both the horizontal relationships between different social groups and the vertical relationships between people and government. Weak ties in any of these dimensions can create problems. Weak horizontal cohesion often leads to conflict, while weak vertical cohesion often results in a lack of trust between the population and the government.

Social cohesion helps bring different groups of society closer together, strengthens their relationships, promotes communication and understanding between them, and reduces inequality, intolerance and insecurity. A socially cohesive society has the potential for stability, justice, peace and prosperity.

In modern scientific discourse, the concept of social cohesion is closely intertwined with the notion of social solidarity. Along with rallying "by conviction" around an ideology within different value systems and around its bearers, solidarity can be based on shared social experiences and feelings that encompass large masses of people.

Solidarity in the social sciences is understood as the unity of a community based on shared interests, values, and moral principles, where individuals feel interconnectedness, mutual dependence, and collective responsibility for achieving common goals (Zelenko et al., 2012).

Solidarity is understood as "collective, shared responsibility", and solidarization is interpreted as "unification for a common cause". That is, social solidarity is interpreted as citizens feeling like they are part of a single whole, as mutual trust, as maintaining social contacts with each other, as avoiding intergroup hostility.

The formation of a solidary society is a complex process in which solidarity develops through society's awareness of the need to balance diverse interests and collectively defend common values based on justice, freedom, equality, and fraternity (Kochan, 2018).

Social solidarity is valuable because it should unite people who live together within certain boundaries, regardless of their well-being, nationality, religiosity, and other differences.

This makes it necessary to intensify the state's activities to integrate newcomers into Ukrainian society, to form a tolerant attitude of the indigenous population towards other ethnic groups and migrants, to eliminate all forms of discrimination, to prevent racism and xenophobia, to deepen intercultural dialogue, and to realize that unconditional protection of the rights of

national minorities in the civilized world is impossible without ensuring a general climate of tolerance towards “others”, which also applies to migrants (Malinovska, 2023).

Ethnic and cultural diversity makes society multi-layered: different traditions, languages, histories, and cultural experiences enrich national culture. This promotes cross-cultural dialogue, tolerance, cultural flexibility and adaptability.

Such diversity can be a resource for international relations, multicultural initiatives, and engagement in the global space – which is beneficial for the modernization, integration, development, sustainability of the country.

The presence of different ethnicities forces the state to develop institutions that support minority rights and inclusiveness, which is a sign of a mature, democratic society and can strengthen social cohesion.

The findings indicate that while Ukrainians remain the dominant ethnic group, minority communities significantly contribute to the country’s cultural diversity. Regional variations in ethnic distribution influence language use, cultural practices, and patterns of civic participation. These differences, however, do not undermine national unity but rather enrich the multicultural character of Ukrainian society.

Thus, the ethnic structure of Ukrainian society in modern conditions is not only a demographic characteristic, but also an important factor in the formation of social cohesion, political stability and national unity. Only under the conditions of effective state ethno-policy, the development of intergroup trust and inclusive institutions will ethno-cultural diversity be transformed from a potential source of fragmentation into a strategic resource for social stability and democratic development. At the same time, it is the level of social solidarity and the ability of the state to ensure a balance between integration and the preservation of cultural diversity that will determine the effectiveness of the consolidation of the Ukrainian political nation in the face of modern security challenges.

2.2. Defining the Civic Identity and Political Nation.

The issues of forming civic identity, establishing a political nation, and the foundations of consensual formation of a social contract between society and the state are also relevant to the topic of social solidarity.

Identity reflects an individual’s awareness of belonging to a nation, state, society, cultural traditions, and shared values within a particular historical context. Ukrainian civic identity is a complex political phenomenon based on historical memory, value orientations, civic consciousness, and emotional attachment to the state. Throughout the years of independence,

Ukrainian civic identity has remained under the influence of both internal transformations and external geopolitical factors (Bevz et al., 2014).

Ukraine today is experiencing a period characterized by an incompletely formed civic identity. Civic identity involves not only formal citizenship, but also solidarity based on shared values and civic cooperation (Bevz et al., 2014).

Fukuyama (2018) argues that the need for recognition of identity is one of the defining drivers of contemporary politics. According to the scholar, identity shaped through the interaction between individual dignity and collective belonging based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, and shared social experience. At the same time, identity possesses a strong integrative potential, contributing to democratic consolidation and social cohesion (Fukuyama, 2018).

National and civic solidarity, related to indicators such as the type of self-identification of an individual, the degree of his/her loyalty to the country, the sense of belonging to the national community, civic responsibility and activism, institutional and interpersonal trust.

The main markers of national and civic identity include attitudes toward the state, national symbols, historical memory, the Ukrainian language, and cultural traditions, which strengthen citizens' awareness of their political and civic belonging to Ukraine (Polishchuk, 2024).

The political nation is the result of evolution, where civic identity unites people, despite ethnic or cultural diversity, around the idea of a common destiny and state. The definition of "political nation" refers to a community of citizens united not by ethnicity, but by common political values, civic identity, and a sense of belonging to the state.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine revealed a high mobilization and unification resource of Ukrainian society. This was manifested both through the actualization of national identity and through the willingness of people and communities to self-organize.

However, recently, along with positive domestic and foreign policy solidarity processes, some negative trends in socio-political development have also become apparent.

Therefore, it is necessary to isolate contradictions to determine the factors that can provoke conflicts in Ukrainian society, which negatively affect the processes of social solidarity and possible ways to increase the level of cohesion of Ukrainian society and its mobilization potential.

Important tasks for preventing social conflicts in wartime and post-war Ukraine include strengthening social cohesion through shared civic values, minimizing social tensions, protecting the interests of different social groups, improving dialogue between citizens and the state, and supporting social integration and stability.

Recent events have demonstrated that Ukrainians with different identity models are capable of uniting around a shared civic and national identity, strengthening the state's resilience to contemporary challenges. In modern conditions, national identity remains a dynamic process based on shared values, dignity, freedom, cultural heritage, and collective responsibility for protecting and rebuilding the Ukrainian state in the post-war period (Gorinov & Drapushko, 2022).

The formation of a national identity in Ukraine is currently shifting from an ethno-cultural paradigm (centered on language, culture, and shared historical memory of the titular group) towards a civic paradigm (based on constitutional patriotism, loyalty to the state, and shared political destiny, regardless of ethnicity).

The concept of the political nation refers to all citizens of the state who share a common commitment to its institutional framework and sovereignty. Achieving this requires high levels of social cohesion, which should be operationalized through indicators, such as:

1. Generalized trust – trust among individuals from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
2. Sense of belonging – the feeling of being an integral part of Ukrainian society and the state.
3. Inclusivity and perceived equality – the perception that all ethnic groups have equal rights and opportunities.

Thus, the formation of civic identity and political nation in Ukraine takes place in conditions of profound socio-political transformations, where the determining factor of consolidation is not ethnic origin, but common political loyalty, responsibility for the state and unity around democratic values. At the same time, the stability of the Ukrainian political nation directly depends on the ability of state institutions to ensure inclusiveness, public trust and integration of various social and ethno-cultural groups into a common space of civic solidarity.

2.3 Intergroup Contact and Tolerance in the Ukrainian Context.

The world is diverse, and it is very difficult to achieve tolerance within diversity.

The modern world is becoming increasingly globalized. Globalization brings different groups and nations into contact. The impact of this interdependence makes their contacts less hostile (Culture of Peace, 2018).

In the modern world, there is a clash of religious, national, and ethnic identities of different cultures and peoples, and therefore tolerance helps protect the fundamental values of civil society and democracy.

The concept of tolerance is not easy to define. On the one hand, it is close to the concepts of understanding, respect, empathy, cooperation and acceptance. On the other hand, all these terms are rather vague and unspecified (Culture of Peace, 2018).

We live in a world of diverse peoples, within which diverse cross-groups interact with each other. Philosophically, tolerance is a characteristic feature of liberalism and is defined as a key element of a progressive social approach to the beliefs, values, and, more broadly, the preferences and qualities of members of different groups.

Tolerance is an important and effective tool for building harmony and peace in any society. Tolerance is not just a personal emotion or attitude. It is a political factor that shapes interactions within and between societies. It is a matter of rational choice, a value system that expands the possibilities and choices of the individual in a globalized multidimensional environment (Culture of Peace, 2018).

Tolerance is currently unevenly distributed across the planet. Some societies are much more tolerant than others, and while tolerance may be progressive, it is far from universal value. This means that tolerance needs to be spread.

The issue of forming tolerance, primarily political, is preceded by the procedure of communication. It is precisely listening to the opinions of certain communities by authorized representatives that can become a catalyst for restoring trust – and, as a result, regaining respect in Ukrainian society.

In the communication plane, tolerance manifested in dialogue, which involves the search for truth and solving current problems by finding ways to mutual understanding and harmony. Dialogue within Ukrainian society among those who have different views on painful issues of the past, present, and a common vision for the country's future creates an atmosphere of tolerance, participation, responsibility, and interaction, which, as international experience shows, is an effective tool for building positive peace and strengthening public institutions (Culture of Peace, 2018).

Dialogue is an important tool for building tolerance, and with it the responsibility to listen and truly hear what people with opposing views have to say. Tolerant societies create a favorable atmosphere where political and economic development becomes possible in the interests of all groups and segments of society (Culture of Peace, 2018).

The concepts of “tolerance” and “trust” should not be equated. Tolerance is considered as the property of being open, accepting others and believing in a person. And trust creates the prerequisites for the development of tolerance, performing the functions of communication, assessment, dialogue, relaxation, recognition, empathy and perception.

Allport specified four conditions for optimal intergroup contact: equal group status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and authority support (Pettigrew, 1998). Allport's contact theory suggests that positive intergroup contact, under specific conditions (equal status, common goals, institutional support), reduces prejudice and fosters tolerance.

In Ukraine, this means:

Quality contact: encouraging shared civic activities, professional interaction, and educational environments where ethnic groups meet on equal terms, thereby challenging stereotypes.

The role of education: as highlighted in the European context, education is a critical mechanism. Ukrainian education must move beyond mere tolerance to fostering intercultural competence – the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people of different cultural backgrounds. This promotes acceptance of diversity as a norm.

Modern Ukrainian culture is the integrity of the cultural and spiritual heritage of not only ethnic Ukrainians, but also representatives of ethnic minorities. Protection of common ethno-cultural wealth, increasing the role of spiritual and cultural spheres in society are the cornerstones of reforming the cultural industry. The cultural industry urgently needs changes to the regulatory framework, to the main regulators in order to further improve the legislation on the cultural development of ethnic groups in Ukraine.

3. Ethnic Structure as a Factor in State Development.

The ethnic composition of Ukraine directly impacts the state's sustainable development in several dimensions.

Ethnocultural differences regarding political and economic development also affect the formation of national unity, political stability, and resilience.

3.1. Ethnopolitical Stability and Resilience.

Ethnic structure directly affects political stability and resilience of the state through mechanisms of representation, balance of interests, and conflict risks. Homogeneous societies usually have higher internal stability, while heterogeneous (multiethnic) ones require democratic institutions, equal rights, and inclusive policies to prevent ethnopolitical destabilization, especially under external pressure.

An ethnopolitical system is formed at the interface between ethnicity and politics – where ethnicity enters politics, influences political processes, or determines their course.

A state where ethnic identity is strongly politicized is inherently vulnerable. When national identity is defined too narrowly, it risks alienating minorities, potentially leading to separatist

sentiments or internal political conflict. This was acutely visible in the historical manipulation of the Russian-speaking population. Conversely, an inclusive civic identity builds state resilience:

Provided military and political unity. Citizens of all ethnic origins defending the shared political project (the state) is the ultimate indicator of a consolidated political nation.

External threats are being mitigated, as the only unified civic identity makes the society immune to external actors attempting to destabilize the country by exploiting ethnic divisions.

Without positioning the ethno-political system, it is impossible to understand ethno-political stability, which was define as a property, characteristic, and function of the ethno-political system. This narrow understanding of ethno-political stability as the stability of the ethno-political system itself, which is form because of the intersection and interaction of the political and ethnic components of the social system. This approach makes it possible to consider the ethno-political system as a type of political system to the extent that the concept of "ethnicity" is incorporate into politics. While the broad concept of ethno-political stability also encompasses the internal environment of the ethno-political system – a multi-ethnic society consisting of a certain number of ethnic communities, which varies depending on the national composition of the state, and the external environment in which the ethno-political system functions (Aslanov, 2015).

Conceptually, it is appropriate to consider resilience in several dimensions, which include, in particular, self-organization and cohesion and national unity, the basis of which is Ukrainian identity.

Resilience is operationalize as the ability to adapt, resist, and self-recover. Social cohesion is represent by the state of social ties between social groups and between society and government.

The study of social cohesion in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine is of particular importance for understanding how different segments of the population cope with challenges, how intergroup relations change, and how societal resilience is strengthen.

The influence of different types of identity (ethnic, linguistic, religious, etc.) on strengthening or weakening social cohesion shows that the analysis of real events, one way or another related to identity issues, indicates the existence of multidirectional trends. In Ukraine, there is both a decrease in possible confrontations based on linguistic identity and the preservation of a strong conflict-generating potential of religious identity and a hidden, but existing conflict between Ukrainian and Russian identity. Instead, national identity is purposefully support and develop as a civic one, which contributes to the strengthening of social solidarity.

Ethnopolitical stability does not mean conservatism of the ethnopolitical structure and relations. The absolutization of these characteristics significantly strengthens the static

component of stability and weakens the dynamic one, which ensures the proper implementation of positive changes, the formation of appropriate institutions that support the stable democratic development of the state and society. Ethnopolitical stability is much more difficult to ensure in a democratic environment, because democratic transformations, democratic forms of participation of ethnosubjects in politics often destabilize the ethnopolitical situation.

Changes and fluctuations that arise in a democratic ethno-political system have unpredictable consequences, primarily for the stability of this system. Democratic processes do not always contribute to solving problems with stability, especially in societies that have many problems of an ethno-political and economic nature.

Ethnopolitical stability and resilience are ensured through transformation, dynamic response to challenges initiated by the authorities or society. In this case, not stabilization mechanisms, but changes in the ethnopolitical system become a necessary condition and element for ensuring ethnopolitical stability.

Ethnopolitical stability and sustainability is achieved not through immutability, inviolability, conservation, but through effective interaction of the ethnic and political components of the ethnopolitical system, the implementation of overdue changes, which can be qualified as meeting the requirements for purpose of stabilizing the ethnopolitical system itself, as well as the sphere of ethno-national relations. Therefore, changes in the ethnopolitical sphere are a necessary condition and element of ethnopolitical stability and sustainability, a guarantee of the development of the state.

The maximum involvement of ethnic communities in decision-making processes in the ethno-national sphere undoubtedly plays a stabilizing role.

Without ensuring ethno-political stability and resilience, the progressive development of the ethno-political system and its long-term preservation in time and space are impossible.

Although the ethnic structure of Ukraine's population is undergoing significant transformations under the influence of war, migration processes, and changes in civic self-identification, the role of the civic model of national unity is increasing. At the same time, the effectiveness of public policy in the field of ethno-national development will be determined by the ability of institutions to ensure social integration, equality of opportunities, and consolidation of society in the context of post-war reconstruction.

3.2. Ethnic structure and Human Capital Development.

Diversity is a recognized driver of innovation and economic growth, provided there is social cohesion.

Human development in modern theories of sustainable development is viewed as a multidimensional process that goes far beyond purely economic indicators and encompasses the level of education, health, social inclusion, security, access to resources and opportunities for self-realization. In this context, the ethnic structure of society is not a background demographic characteristic, but a systemic factor in the formation and reproduction of the human potential of the state.

In multi-ethnic societies, human development indicators are often asymmetrical. Different ethnic groups may demonstrate differences in access to quality education, healthcare, the labor market, political participation, and social elevators. Such differences are not an automatic consequence of cultural characteristics, but mostly reflect the quality of state policy, institutional capacity, and the level of inclusiveness of social systems.

For Ukraine, this problem is of particular importance given: historically formed regional inequality; varying degrees of urbanization of territories of compact residence of national minorities; consequences of deportations, assimilation policies of the Soviet period; modern migration processes associated with the war.

Unequal access to human development opportunities creates the risk of reproducing social marginalization, which over time can transform into political alienation or a decrease in the level of civic loyalty. Therefore, the ethnic structure is directly related to issues of social cohesion and national security.

Sustainable development of the state is impossible without effective use of human capital, which in a multi-ethnic society is internally diverse. National minorities of Ukraine have unique competencies: multilingualism, cross-border social networks and specific cultural knowledge. Under conditions of proper integration, these resources can significantly increase the competitiveness of the state.

At the same time, ignoring the ethnic dimension of human capital leads to its loss through emigration, marginalization or reduced social mobility. The problem of forcibly displaced people and migrants, who, integrating into new communities, change the local ethnic structure, is especially relevant. Effective integration policies can turn these processes from a challenge into a resource for the restoration of regions.

The education system plays a central role in transforming ethnic diversity into a resource for human development. It is through education that basic competencies, civic values, intercultural sensitivity, and a sense of belonging to a common social space are formed.

In the Ukrainian context, education performs a dual function: integration (through the establishment of the state language, common historical narratives, and civic values) and

compensatory (through ensuring equal access for representatives of ethnic minorities and vulnerable groups to quality educational resources).

Regions with a compact population of national minorities, where the educational infrastructure is often less developed and socio-economic conditions are worse, require special attention. Inclusive education policies in such regions directly affect the quality of human capital, curbing the outflow of youth and promoting local development.

Human development is impossible without the functioning of effective mechanisms of social mobility. In a multi-ethnic society, social mobility becomes an indicator of the extent to which the state is able to guarantee equality of opportunities regardless of ethnic origin.

A low level of social mobility among individual ethnic groups:

- limits the use of human potential;
- contributes to the formation of “closed” communities;
- reinforces horizontal social inequality.

In contrast, high mobility contributes to the formation of an integrated political nation, in which ethnic identity does not act as a barrier to professional or civic self-realization. In this sense, state policy in the field of employment, regional development and entrepreneurship acquires a clearly expressed ethno-political dimension, even if it not formally declared as such.

Internal and external migration is potential for renewal if the state is able effectively integrate internally displaced people and returnees into local economies and social communities. The ethnic diversity of new communities, with appropriate policies, can stimulate innovation, the development of services, and interregional ties.

It is important to deepen global integration. The tolerant and inclusive society attracts investment and retains high-skilled human capital, as people from diverse backgrounds feel welcome and secure.

Human development encompasses not only formal skills, but also cultural capital, which includes language, traditions, values, social networks and symbolic resources. Ethnic communities in Ukraine accumulate significant cultural capital that be used for the development of creative industries; cultural diplomacy; intercultural communication, etc. Ignoring this potential reduces human development to a technocratic model, while its use contributes to the formation of a sustainable, diverse and competitive social system.

Regarding cultural capital, national minorities, such as the Crimean Tatars, Hungarians, and Poles, possess unique cultural knowledge, linguistic skills, and transnational ties that act as bridges to global and regional markets, contributing to the state’s overall human and cultural capital.

The key factor determining the impact of ethnic structure on human development is the quality of institutions. It is they who set the rules for access to resources, guarantee rights, and ensure fairness and predictability of social processes.

For Ukraine, this means that:

- human development policy should be integrated with ethnopolitics;
- social programs should take into account the ethnocultural specificity of regions;
- mechanisms for citizen participation should be accessible to all ethnic groups.

Inclusive institutions contribute to the formation of human potential as a common national resource, rather than the sum of disparate group capabilities.

In a strategic perspective, the ethnic structure of Ukrainian society can become one of the key resources for sustainable development, if the state:

- provides equal starting opportunities for human development;
- invests in education, culture and social infrastructure of multi-ethnic regions;
- supports integration, not assimilation models of policy.

Thus, human development in a multi-ethnic society becomes not only a social goal, but also an indicator of the maturity of a political nation and the effectiveness of public administration. Ukraine's ability to integrate ethnic diversity into the human development system will determine not only social cohesion, but also the competitiveness of the state in the post-war period.

Thus, social cohesion in modern Ukraine being formed as a key mechanism for consolidating society in the context of war and the transformation of national identity, where trust, civic solidarity, and inclusive institutions play a decisive role. At the same time, the stability of the state largely depends on the effectiveness of public administration in ensuring intergroup interaction, minimizing social gaps, and supporting common democratic values.

4. Ethnic Structure as a Factor in State Development.

In the modern scientific paradigm, state development is increasingly view as a complex process that encompasses institutional capacity, economic dynamics, social stability, security resilience, and international integration. In this context, the ethnic structure of society appears not only as a socio-cultural characteristic, but also as a structural factor that directly affects the trajectory of state development.

The relationship between the ethnic structure and national identity in Ukraine is characterize by a dynamic evolution, moving from a multi-faceted regional and ethno-linguistic identity towards a unified civic identity (Kulyk, 2023).

Ethnic structure is a key factor in the development of a state, influencing its stability, socio-economic processes, cultural diversity and political relations. It determines the level of integration of society, the ability to interact and form a single identity, and can be a source of both competitive advantages and interethnic conflicts.

4.1. The Shift from Ethnic to Civic Nationalism.

The transition from ethnic to civic nationalism is a natural stage in the development of modern states, especially those characterized by ethnocultural diversity. Ethnic nationalism is based on the idea of a nation as a community of common origin, language, culture and historical memory, where belonging is often exclusive. In contrast, civic nationalism defines a nation as a political and legal community of citizens united by loyalty to the state, its institutions, constitutional values and a common political future.

In scientific literature, this transition is viewed as a change in the model of legitimation of statehood: from cultural-ethnic to institutional-civic. As emphasized by Habermas J., modern democratic states increasingly rely on the principle of constitutional patriotism, in which political loyalty is formed not around ethnic identity, but around common norms, rights and democratic procedures. This approach reduces the risks of exclusion of minorities and creates a basis for stable political integration (Habermas, 1996).

Scholarly work emphasizes a long-term trend, significantly accelerated by the war, of a transition from an ethnic definition of the nation to a civic-political one (Razumkov Centre's, 2024).

Identity in the pre-war period was characterized as follows. Prior to 2014, and in some regions until 2022, national identity was often viewed through the prism of a cultural-linguistic dichotomy (Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians vs. Russian-speaking Ukrainians and Russians). This contributed to regional disparities in geopolitical orientations and historical memory.

The War (2014-2025) seen as a unifying factor. She has acted as a powerful national consolidator. It has largely diminished the contradictions that previously divided society, uniting citizens based on a shared experience of defending sovereignty. The civic component of identity - loyalty to the state, its symbols, and its democratic choice - has grown significantly. The feeling of national pride and patriotism has increased, strengthening societal resilience (Kolinko & Fedorchenko, 2025).

During this period, definitions of the nation changed. While the civic definition of the Ukrainian nation (a community of all citizens, regardless of ethnic origin or language) saw majority support in 2015 (56%) and 2021 (51%), a June 2024 survey showed a decrease to 46%. Simultaneously, support for the ethnic definition (based on Ukrainian ancestry) increased to 28%,

and the cultural definition (based on Ukrainian language/traditions) increased to 21%. This suggests a complex, potentially hybrid, shift in the understanding of the nation, where the titular ethnos is cultural and historical markers are re-asserting their importance within the overall civic framework as a response to external aggression (Razumkov Centre's, 2024).

Regarding the de-russification process, the war has massively transformed the socio-cultural space, necessitating a de-russification of symbolic and mental spheres.

Happened distancing from Russian influence. Ukrainians are actively distancing themselves from Russian culture and symbolic space, replacing them with national and European markers. This is evident in the dramatic drop in those identifying with Russian cultural traditions (from 11% to 0.5% between 2017 and 2024) and Soviet cultural traditions (from 16% to 4%) (Razumkov Centre's, 2024).

Also observed linguistic shifts. The Ukrainian language is increasingly dominant. The number of citizens using Ukrainian at home rose from 64% in 2021 to 71% in December 2022, reflecting a conscious self-identification as Ukrainian through language. This symbolic refusal of Russian as the primary language, especially among former Russophone populations, highlights the growing importance of the state language as a marker of national identity and a crucial element of social integration.

The full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine on February 24, 2022 led to profound transformations in the mass consciousness of Ukrainians. They are beginning to rethink their national identity. According to O. Reznik, “societal shifts in the collective identity of Ukrainians have occurred... They have become evidence of a break in the traditional perception of themselves as a disadvantaged population whose fate does not depend on them” (Reznik, 2022).

For states with a multiethnic population, the transition to civic nationalism is not only an ideological choice, but also a functional necessity. It is the civic model of the nation that allows us to combine the preservation of cultural diversity with the unity of the political community, since it recognizes the equality of citizens regardless of their ethnic origin. In such a model, ethnic identity does not disappear, but ceases to be the determining criterion of political belonging.

In the Ukrainian context, the transition from ethnic to civic nationalism has an accelerated and asymmetrical nature, caused by external aggression and a threat to state sovereignty. The war actualized the civic dimension of national belonging, when the determinants were not language or origin, but the willingness to defend the state, support its political course and share responsibility for its future. At the same time, the preservation of the cultural role of

the titular nation performs an integrative function, forming the symbolic framework of the civic nation.

Thus, the transition to civic nationalism does not mean the denial of the ethnic dimension, but rather its subordination to a common political project. The ability of a state to institutionally consolidate this model determines the level of its political maturity, resilience to internal and external challenges, and prospects for long-term development.

4.2. Ethnic Diversity and Sustainable State Development.

The ethnic structure is not only a factor in identity but also a variable in the equation for sustainable state development, encompassing political, social, and economic stability.

Ethnic and cultural diversity is a fundamental value and resource for the stability and development of the state. Ethno-political measures should be extended to “new” migrant minorities, providing them with guarantees against violation of rights, marginalization, and forced assimilation (Malinovska, 2023).

Ethnic structure influences the economic development of a state through several channels: regional specialization, cross-border ties, labor mobility, and investment attractiveness. Studies show that under effective institutions, ethnic diversity can act as a factor of economic dynamics, rather than a brake on development.

Putnam R. analyzing complex societies, notes that “diversity in itself is neither good nor evil – its consequences are determined by the quality of institutions and social rules” (Putnam, 2007). For Ukraine, this means that the economic effect of ethnic structure depends on whether the state provides equal access to economic opportunities and prevents ethnic segmentation of the labor market.

Regions with a compact population of national minorities, where cross-border potential and increased risks of socio-economic peripherality are combined, require special attention. In such conditions, state regional policy acquires a clearly expressed ethno-structural dimension.

In modern conditions, the ethnic structure is directly related to issues of state and national security. The politicization of ethnicity, especially with the participation of external actors, is one of the most common tools of hybrid influence. As noted in the analytical materials of the National Institute of Security and Defense, “the ethnic factor can be used as a catalyst for destabilization in conditions of weak state ethno-policy” (Ethnopolitical Threats, 2016).

The Ukrainian experience after 2014 convincingly demonstrates that an inclusive model of citizenship significantly reduces the vulnerability of the state to external manipulation. At the same time, ignoring the socio-economic or cultural problems of individual ethnic groups creates “points of tension” that can be used against state interests.

Thus, the ethnic structure becomes not only a social, but also a strategic factor of development, requiring systematic management at the level of state security policy.

Having examined national consolidation as security, the following should be noted. Contemporary research (Reznik, 2022) views a strong, consolidated national identity as a significant component of state security and resilience. The newfound national cohesion, driven by the existential threat, provides a robust foundation for political and military mobilization, essential for survival and eventual recovery (Kolinko & Fedorchenko, 2025).

An important role is played by integration and acceptance. The high level of goodwill and acceptance towards traditional national minorities (Poles, Romanians, Hungarians, Crimean Tatars, etc.) is a sign of a relatively inclusive society. Support for the active participation of national minorities in community development (73% of respondents) and for language courses for new residents (78%) demonstrates a commitment to building an inclusive state where ethnic diversity can be a source of strength, not division.

However, the risk of ethnocentric approaches remains. Some scholars warn that an overly ethnocentric approach to nation building, while seemingly consolidating in the short term, poses a conflict-prone factor that could endanger the possibilities for establishing a cohesive society with a shared sense of belonging for all minorities. Therefore, sustaining the civic-national consensus post-war is critical to prevent feelings of alienation or exclusion among non-titular groups.

The relationship between socio-economic stability and national identity requires separate research. Studies (e.g., 2024 research on national identity and economic activity) demonstrate a link between the level of national identity and socio-economic activity and regional human development indices. The formation of a single, unified Ukrainian socio-cultural space is considered a top national interest (Strategy of strengthening of Ukrainian national and civic identity, 2024), essential for long-term development.

About cultural security and innovation it can be noted that the development of a common, competitive Ukrainian cultural product and a unified socio-cultural space, which integrates diverse elements of the ethnic cultures present in Ukraine, is seen as crucial for cultural security and for fostering an environment conducive to innovation and modernization.

In the context of globalization, the process of cultural transformations, cultural mutual recognition has accelerated both at the interpersonal level and at the group level, at the level of contact of traditional and modern mass national cultures. There is a transition to a policy of integration with the preservation of the features of cultural diversity, a policy of multiculturalism, cultural pluralism or multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is understood as a component of state

policy and practice, including institutional (legislative), which is aimed at supporting cultural, in our context ethno-national, communities in order to preserve the specific features of the cultural heritage of these groups of citizens.

The ethnic structure influences the international positioning of the state, especially in the context of European integration. The protection of the rights of national minorities is one of the key conditions for compliance with European standards of democracy and human rights. “Minority policy has become a component of the general architecture of democratic governance in Europe” (Medda-Windischer, 2017).

For Ukraine, compliance with these standards is of not only normative but also practical importance, since:

- affects foreign policy legitimacy;
- builds the trust of international partners;
- reduces the risks of interstate conflicts on ethnic grounds.

In this sense, the ethnic structure is a factor that directly links the internal development of the state with its foreign policy capabilities.

In general, it can be argued that the ethnic structure of society is an indicator of the quality of state development. The ability of the state to integrate ethnic diversity into a common legal, economic and political space indicates its institutional capacity and strategic maturity. Yevtukh and Troshchynsky rightly point out that “the multiethnicity of Ukrainian society is a system-forming factor that, with proper management, can ensure the stability and development of the state” (Yevtukh & Troshchynskyi, 2004). Therefore, the ethnic structure is neither an obstacle nor an automatic advantage for development – it is a challenge, the answer to which determines the future of the state.

Thus, institutional inclusiveness and effective ethnopolitics are key factors in strengthening social stability, preventing interethnic risks, and consolidating the Ukrainian political nation. At the same time, the effectiveness of Ukraine's post-war development will largely depend on the ability of the public administration system to ensure equality of opportunity, intercultural dialogue, and the involvement of different ethnic communities in the processes of state-building and reconstruction of the country.

5. Mechanisms for Enhancing Cohesion and National Identity.

The path to transforming ethnic diversity into a factor of sustainable development involves systemic policy interventions.

The process of national consolidation is accompanied by significant ethno-political risks, which have now become threats to the territorial integrity of Ukraine. To strengthen

consolidation in countries with a multi-ethnic population (Ukraine is such a state), one of the main mechanisms is to minimize ethno-political risks and threats.

Among the main ethnopolitical threats to national consolidation are ethnic discrimination, dissatisfaction of ethnic communities with their status and rights, politicization of ethnicity and ethnoconfessional relations, regional differences in identity, Russification of the linguistic space, external political influence through diasporas, and imperfections in the legal regulation of ethnonational relations (Etnopolitical threats, 2016).

European countries have already faced problems with the implementation of multiculturalism policies, problems of reluctance or unwillingness of immigrants to integrate into European civilization.

Multiculturalism is a type of ethnocultural dialogue policy in solving regional problems, a method of analyzing and researching modern ethno-national processes, a means of forming a tolerant attitude of citizens towards each other, regardless of ethnicity, race or religion, and promoting the establishment of interethnic harmony in Ukrainian society.

Mechanisms for strengthening cohesion and national identity are reflected in the table 1.

Table 1.

Mechanisms for strengthening cohesion and national identity

Mechanism	Rationale (Based on Social Cohesion Theory)	Ukrainian Application
Inclusive Language Policy	Ensures institutional support for minority groups while affirming the common language as a tool for state-building and integration)	Affirming the status of the state language (Ukrainian) while guaranteeing rights and support for the languages of national minorities in education and culture
Civic Education Reform	Develops civic knowledge, empathy, and intercultural competence, mitigating perceived cultural threat	Curricula reform focusing on shared Ukrainian history, constitutional rights, and the common political destiny of all citizens of Ukraine
Decentralization and Local Autonomy	Allows minorities to exercise cultural rights and participate in governance, increasing their sense of belonging and perceived inclusion	Granting cultural and educational autonomy to regions densely populated by national minorities, while ensuring alignment with central state policy
Promoting Shared Narratives	Counteracts narratives of historical grievance or cultural competition, substituting them with stories of shared contribution and collective success	Development of public media, arts, and memorialization projects that showcase the historical contributions of all ethnic groups to the Ukrainian state

Source: developed by the author

Specific steps to implement the state policy of identifying and preventing ethno-political threats and risks to national consolidation are the following (Etnopolitical threats, 2016) [own translation]:

1. It is necessary to develop an ethno-cultural policy and its legislative framework. It became one of the priority areas of the state's activity, an integral part of humanitarian policy aimed at the formation of national patriotism, the revival and development of the cultures of all ethnic components of Ukrainian society: ethnic Ukrainians, the Crimean Tatar people, and national minorities.

2. To carry out national and regional monitoring of the dynamics of the population composition by ethnic indicator; to create and update archives of relevant statistical information. Based on these materials, to analyze and provide information for research into ethno-political dynamics and its forecasting, to adequately assess the likelihood of ethnic conflict situations in the regions, and to make effective management decisions in the area under study.

3. The triad of preservation and development of national culture is important: the culture of the individual (citizen), the region, the Ukrainian people and Ukraine as a whole. By giving preference to one of the components, the state will narrow the possibilities for the development of the other and lose that important balance in the combination of the personal, individual and collective, socially important.

4. It is time to develop a new policy regarding Ukrainianness in terms of approaches and quality, the creation of a modern Ukrainian culture of the European model, and the harmonization of interethnic cultural influences.

The task of the policy of multiculturalism is to combine the interests of the development of Ukrainian culture with other ethnic cultures.

The combination of ethno-cultural conflict with ethno-political conflict, the artificial imposition of a different identity on the population and the encouragement to recognize oneself as another ethnicity contrary to Ukrainianness requires close attention from central and local authorities.

The dominant prerequisite and the main guarantor of interethnic harmony and social unity of Ukraine is, first of all, the integrity, mentality and tolerance of the Ukrainian ethnic nation itself, which has confirmed its state-forming character and ability to build equal relations with all ethno-national groups living on the territory of the state. Ukrainians have experience of joint, long-term, mostly conflict-free, living on the same territory with representatives of other ethnic groups, we are characterized by a relatively high level of complementarity. Ukrainian ethnonation is a system-forming element of Ukrainian society, it performs the functions of the demographic

and ethnic basis of this society, the priority generator of statehood and the main carrier of the state language (Yevtukh & Troshchynskyi, 2004).

Continuous monitoring of ethno-political processes and the search for ways to avoid conflict-generating situations on an interethnic basis, improving the legal foundations of the functioning of a society with a multi-ethnic population are important in the implementation of the state's ethno-cultural policy.

In line with this policy, the authorities should promote the functioning of national-cultural societies of national minorities, the spiritual awakening of ethnic groups, the revival of national traditions, the preservation of ethnic identity, the intensification of ties with historical homelands, and continue to improve the relevant legal framework for the protection of national minorities.

Support for the cultures of newly emerging minorities should be guaranteed to them as citizens of Ukraine on the basis of general equality before the law.

Ensuring the cultural and educational needs of local ethnic groups, taking into account the multi-ethnic component in socio-economic policy will guarantee the avoidance of ethno-cultural, and therefore political, conflict in the region.

It is important that in the ethnocultural perspective of the social development of the Ukrainian state, a harmonious combination of the dominance of Ukrainian values in the multiethnic culture of the Ukrainian political nation as a factor of interethnic harmony and manifestations of the traditional culture of national minorities is formed. After all, the formation of a new identity of the Ukrainian nation is impossible without the formation of a common cultural heritage.

The state should focus on integration mechanisms aimed at supporting and developing those features of kinship that are already considered by the majority of citizens as important components of patriotism and civic loyalty: awareness of the history and culture of Ukraine, the Ukrainian language, Ukrainian traditions, and the upbringing of respect for representatives of different nationalities.

The territorial integrity and sustainable development of any state depend on national consolidation.

Sustaining a certain culture is not a matter of having yearly ethnic festivals or having a few classes taught in one's mother tongue as a child. It is a matter of creating and sustaining a set of public institutions through the use of instruments that are similar to those used by the majority in their program of nation-building, i.e. standardized public education, official languages, including language requirements, government employment, etc. (Medda-Windischer, 2017).

While establishing interethnic peace, understanding and harmony, one should not turn a blind eye to destructive processes and negative trends, which, if they get out of control of the state, can threaten cultural and mental divisions, transformation. The model according to which some ethnic groups and their cultures are stimulated, while others are restricted, cannot be harmonious and sustainable.

In modern Ukraine, a complex search for its own path of development of the ethno-political sphere is underway. The restoration of Ukraine's state independence gave a powerful impetus to the national and ethnic mobilization of both Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians. That is, representatives of all ethnic groups in Ukraine strive for the revival of their own ethnic specificity: their native language, culture, spirituality, traditions and customs.

Thus, the transformation of Ukrainian national identity in the context of war testifies to the strengthening of the civic model of social consolidation, where inclusive institutions, public trust, and shared democratic values play a key role in ensuring social stability and national unity.

6. Methods.

The empirical analysis of the relationship between the ethnic structure, national identity, and social cohesion in Ukraine requires a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis of population attitudes with qualitative assessment of policy impacts.

The scientific, theoretical and methodological basis of the study is the principles, techniques and a set of general scientific and special methods that determine the achievement of a specific goal and set tasks. The methodological basis of the study is theoretical and methodological analysis of the ethnic structure of Ukrainian society, national identity and sustainable development. The study used a number of relevant scientific methods (empirical and theoretical), which allowed to achieve the set goal and confirm the author's idea. The following methods were used: descriptive (to substantiate key threats, challenges and determinants); scientific observation (to collect reliable information about the object of study); structural-functional (to reveal the main characteristics of the object of study), analysis and synthesis, systemic (for the study of the system as a whole and its components); generalization, semantic analysis, induction and deduction (for the study of theoretical foundations).

7. Results.

The conducted research confirms that the ethnic structure of Ukrainian society in modern conditions should be interpreted not only as a demographic or ethnocultural characteristic, but also as a multidimensional factor influencing social cohesion, civic nation-building, institutional stability and sustainable development of the state. It is established that in conditions of war

Ukraine has undergone an accelerated transition from a predominantly ethnocultural model of identity to a civic model based on shared political values, institutional trust, solidarity and collective responsibility for statehood.

The research substantiates that ethnic diversity does not inherently generate social fragmentation or political instability. The decisive factor determining the potential for development or conflict of ethnic heterogeneity is the quality of public administration and the inclusiveness of institutions. Institutional inclusiveness mediates between ethnic diversity and social cohesion, ensuring equal opportunities for participation, reducing social isolation, strengthening trust, and integrating different ethnic and social groups into a common political and legal space.

An important result of the study is the confirmation that social cohesion in modern Ukraine increasingly functions not only as a socio-cultural phenomenon, but also as a mechanism of national resilience in the face of threats and challenges. Civil society participation, volunteer practice, horizontal solidarity, and institutional cooperation strengthen the adaptive potential of society and reduce the vulnerability of the state to external manipulations based on ethnic, linguistic, or regional differences.

It has been proven that the effectiveness of public management directly affects the state's ability to maintain stability, prevent ethno-political risks, and support sustainable post-war recovery. In this context, inclusive public policy acquires strategic importance as a mechanism for strengthening civic identity, ensuring social integration, supporting intercultural dialogue and preserving democratic legitimacy in periods of societal transformation.

The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of applying its results to develop inclusive reconstruction policies, regional integration strategies, intercultural governance mechanisms, civic education programs and institutional systems for monitoring social cohesion and ethno-political risks. It precisely the effectiveness of Ukraine's post-war modernization that will largely depend on the institutional capacity of public administration systems to integrate diverse ethnic communities into a common national development strategy, while preserving cultural pluralism and equal rights.

Ethnic diversity conceptualizes as a strategic resource for resilience and sustainable development rather than a factor of fragmentation in a society transformed by war. It further substantiates institutional inclusiveness, civic integration, and institutional trust as key governance mechanisms for strengthening the resilience of multiethnic societies under contemporary security challenges.

The study substantiates a conceptual model in which ethnic diversity, under conditions of institutional inclusiveness, contributes to the strengthening of social cohesion, formation of national resilience, and sustainable state development. In this model, institutional inclusiveness functions as a key governance mechanism that transforms ethnocultural diversity from a potential factor of fragmentation into a strategic resource for democratic stability, civic integration, and post-war recovery.

The interdependence between ethnopolitical governance, social cohesion, and sustainable development within the framework of the post-conflict transformation of the state substantiated. The proposed analytical approach allows us to consider ethnic structure not as a static demographic category, but as a dynamic institutional and managerial factor, that affects the long-term stability and adaptive capacity of the state.

Further research should focus on empirically assessing regional models of social cohesion, comparative analysis of post-conflict integration strategies, and evaluation of institutional mechanisms aimed at strengthening resilience, democratic sustainability, and inclusive governance in multi-ethnic societies.

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