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Territorial reform of areas with concentrated residence of minorities within decentralization policy under polyethnicity in Ukraine

Sierhiei Sakhanienko[1], Natalia Kolisnichenko[2*), Oleg Dolzhenkov[3]

[1] *Public Administration and Regional Studies Chair, Odessa Regional Institute for Public Administration of the National Academy for Public Administration under the President of Ukraine*

[2] *Odessa Regional Institute for Public Administration of the National Academy for Public Administration under the President of Ukraine*

[3] *Educational Management and Civil Service Chair, South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K.D. Ushynsky.*

Abstract

The ethnic problem is of particular importance with neighboring states, which, as kin-states, seek to protect their diaspora in Ukraine. The purpose of the article is to analyze the results of territorial transformations in the areas of concentrared residence of ethnic minorities in Ukraine and their impact on the current ethno-political balance. To examine the territorial transformations in Ukraine various methods were used - statistical analysis and survey method to generalize the attitude of the population to territorial transformations in the areas of ethnic groups settlements; documentary method to analyse international and Ukraine documents on territorial forming; observation to reveal the minorities moods; content analysis of local governments documents etc. Being based on situational and comparative approaches, on statistical data, the peculiarities of the settlement and administrative structure in areas of concentrated residence of minorities in Ukraine were examined both before the reform of the territorial structure and after the corresponding changes in 2020. On the basis of a wide expert survey, the problematic issues of territorial reform in areas of concentrated residence of minorities were identified, and ways of their solution were proposed. After the analysis of the index of ethnic tolerance in areas of concentrated residence of minorities, a forecast was made about the stability of the territorial structure in areas of concentrated residence of minorities (Romanians and Moldovans), including the mixed (multi-ethnic) municipalities and raions (territorial districts).

Keywords: *decentralization, ethnic policy, ethnic group, ethno-territorial structure*

*) Corresponding Author
E-mail : natakolisn2@gmail.com

Introduction

After declaring independence in 1991, Ukraine was perhaps the only part of the former USSR that managed to avoid ethnic conflicts. This is especially surprising as Ukraine is a Plural Society. Lijphart (1977) defines a Plural Society as a multi-component society consisting of a combination of organized and unorganized groups that differ in linguistic, religious, ethnic, etc. Features. Speaking about such groups, Murphy (1989) makes a remark that to create an area with legal or administrative signIficance is to bring into being a functional spatial unit that can profoundly alter ideas about social

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groupings. And since ethnic-group identity is grounded in a historical association between people and place, ethnicity is inherently territorial.

The multi-component nature of the Ukrainian society is due to the fact that modern Ukraine - within its existing borders - was formed in the 20th century within the USSR. It was formed through both natural and artificial unification of most Ukrainian ethnic territories that were previously within the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, and after their collapse also within the borders of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania. However, the process of unification of Ukrainian lands in the USSR also led to the fact that within the boundaries of Ukraine there were ethnic areas of Russians, Hungarians, Romanians, Poles, Crimean Tatars, Bulgarians, Gagauzes, Moldovans. In general, more than 20% of Ukrainian citizens belong to ethnic minorities. The multi-component nature of Ukrainian society is also manifested in the mismatch of ethnic and linguistic self-identification. In particular, for about 50% of Ukraine citizens, the Russian language is the main language of communication. The languages of national minorities were recognized as official regional languages in the places of their concentrated residence. This was also reflected in the media, in the education system, and in the system of public administration.

However, the remaining ethno-political balance was largely 'destroyed' after the political events of 2004 (the so-called "Orange Revolution") and especially in 2014 (the so-called "Revolution of Dignity"). Together with a number of positive reforms, as a result of these events in Ukraine, the rights of national minorities and language groups were significantly limited. The Ukrainian language has become the only one recognized in the media, education, public administration, as well as in other public spheres. Despite the declared desire to access the European Union, Ukraine, nevertheless, did not follow the recommendations of the European institutions in the sphere of minorities, which caused significant tensions with the neighboring states. In particular, before resolving the issue of the rights of the Hungarian minority, Hungary actually vetoed Ukraine's efforts to join NATO and the EU. The Russian annexation of Crimea, separatism in the Donbas, and Russia's invasion of the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine where a vast number of Russian ethnic groups live and where there is a preferably Russian-speaking population, largely contain an ethnic component.

Following the political shift in 2014, Ukraine launched a policy of decentralization, which is reposed on the use of instruments of delegation, deconcentration, devolution and divestment on the basis of subsidiarity. The general direction of decentralization policy in Ukraine is to form a self-government system, which is territorially, socially, financially and economically capable. Such a system will solve effectively most of the local problems faced by the Ukrainian citizens. The relevant changes primarily concern: the sharing of functions from the State to local self-government; strengthening the financial fundamentals of local self-government; reorganization of administrative structures of both state and local self-government; improving administrative procedures.

One of the key issues in the implementation of decentralization policy as Table 1 indicates has been the territorial transformation aiming to reduce the number of municipalities (communities) radically. The formation of new communities took place in 2015-2019 within a voluntary amalgamation (about 25% of communities were amalgamated). In June-July 2020, the Government of Ukraine through its centralized decision provided a radical consolidation of communities and raions.

Table 1. Changes in the system of territorial arrangement of Ukraine – developed by the authors

Territorial units	2015	2020
Upper level		
Autonomous Republic of Crimea	1	1
Oblasts	24	24
Cities with special status (Kyiv, Sevastopol*)	2	2
Middle level		
Raions	490	136**
Average area	1,2 thousand sq. km.	4,5 thousand sq. km
Average population	40 thousand people	340 thousand people
Cities with the status of a raion	178	-
Basic level		
Communities (hromadas)	11520	1469***
Average area	50 sq. km.	400 sq. km.
Average population	2 thousand people	29 thousand people

Source: processed by the authors

* the city of Sevastopol is not controlled by the government of Ukraine

** incl. 17 raions on the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and some territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts that are not controlled by the Government of Ukraine

*** incl. 33 communities in some territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts that are not controlled by the Government of Ukraine. In the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, which is not controlled by the government of Ukraine, the division into communities was not carried out.

One of the challenges of decentralization policy in Ukraine is the implementation of territorial transformations in the areas of concentrated residence of ethnic minorities (Smith and Semenyshyn 2016). It is associated with the residents' fears of reducing their rights' protection as a result of the territorial reform. As some experts consider, that can strengthen inter-ethnic contradictions leading to conflicts (Henke 2020). Nadolishniy (1998) also emphasizes this threat. The other well-known Ukrainian expert on decentralization, Kuchabsky (2010) argues that in the context of territorial reform, the expediency to preserve the integrity of microsocial systems formed on the basis of few ethnonational minorities in Ukraine is to be relevant. Generally, as A. Murphy considers, a formally sanctioned ethnic territory is unlikely to fulfill the kinds of functional or symbolic roles that sustain or promote ethnic identity unless most group members already feel a bond with the area. Territorial policies that have undermined or have had little effect on ethnic identity suggest the importance of at least three overlapping factors: 1) the relative power of the dominant ethnic group controlling the governmental institutions within the state, and the ability and willingness of this group to exercise that power; 2) the spatial relationship between the territory that is accorded some special status on the basis of ethnic considerations and the distribution of the group in question; 3) the extent to which the group in question already has a well-developed sense of ethnic identity (Murphy 1989).

In Ukraine, more than 1,000 "old" communities were characterized by the concentrated living of ethnic minorities (Solonenko 2017). It is no coincidence that the voluntary consolidation of communities в 2015-2020 has hardly affected them. Speaking about such groups, A. Murphy makes a remark that to create an area with legal or administrative significance is to bring into being a functional spatial unit that can profoundly alter ideas about social groupings. And since ethnic-group identity is grounded in a historical association between people and place, ethnicity is inherently territorial (Murphy 1989).

According to Art. 16 of Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities the Parties shall refrain from measures which alter the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities and are aimed at restricting the rights and freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the Framework Convention. This article provides, in particular, taking into account the ethnic factor in the implementation of territorial transformations, changes in the boundaries of constituencies, as well as districts of the judiciary and other structures.

Under the protection of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, there are languages that are traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population and different from the official language(s) of that State. Moreover, "territory in which the regional or minority language is used" means the geographical area in which the said language is the mode of expression of a number of people justifying the adoption of the various protective and promotional measures provided for in this Charter. In addition to the right to use the language, the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages emphasizes the need to respect the geographical area of each regional or minority language in order to ensure that the existing or new administrative divisions do not constitute an obstacle to the promotion of regional or minority language in question.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages must comply with Article 5 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, according to which changes in local authority boundaries shall not be made without prior consultation of the local communities concerned, possibly by means of a referendum where this is permitted by statute. Due to the above, in areas of concentrated residence of ethnic minorities, the ethnic principle will be the basis for clarifying the opinion of local communities.

The attempts to adhere to these principles have (in some way) influenced the legal regulation of the amalgamation of local communities in areas of concentrated residence of ethnic minorities in Ukraine. In the Constitution of Ukraine (Article 132) the principles of the territorial structure of Ukraine take into account the historical and demographic characteristics, ethnic and cultural traditions. The Law of Ukraine "On Voluntary Amalgamation of Local Communities" stipulates that historical, natural, ethnic, cultural and other factors influencing the socio-economic development of a community are taken into account while making decisions on the voluntary consolidation of communities.

It is no coincidence that PACE Resolution № 2145 of January 25, 2017 on the functioning of democratic institutions in Ukraine (paragraph 5.1.) proclaims that "the decentralization process is important for the stability and democratic consolidation of the country as a whole, also taking into account the ethnic composition of the regions". According to the Fourth Opinion on Ukraine of the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, "The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to ensure that, when redrawing administrative boundaries, the rights and freedoms which flow from the Framework Convention are not restricted and that effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in the discussions at local level is guaranteed".

The Treaty on Good Neighbourghhood and Cooperation between Ukraine and Romania stipulates that the parties shall refrain from taking measures that change the proportional composition of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to

ethnic minorities, aimed at restricting the rights and freedoms of those persons arising from international norms and standards.

The relation of ethnic groups to territory is thus an important point in explaining the phenomenon of multinational states. Among the scholars, the thesis about the conditionality of the connection between ethnicity and territory is widespread (Anderson, 2017; Anderson, 2006; Blanton, 2015; Connor, 1994; Murphy, 1989; Quer, 2013; Safran, 1999). The corresponding territory which is filled in the imagination of people with cultural meaning becomes meaningful (Murphy 1989). The meaning of territory or space is usually described in terms of "homeland", "native home". Homeland in most cases is perceived as something "given", "unchosen"; something that cannot be changed (Anderson 2017). If any ethnic community is associated with a certain geographical territory, which is filled with ethnic meaning, there is a coincidence of two identities - ethnic and territorial, and together they can form the ethno-territorial identity. Such a coincidence is one of the prerequisites for the emergence of intercommunal conflicts and the growth of separatist tendencies.

It is under ethno-territorial fragmentation that regional ethno-nationalism develops - an ideology that forms the idea about an ethnic community as a nation with its own political traditions and institutions, and therefore entitled to its own nation-state. Besides, in many states a phenomenon which was identified in Western science as "internal nations", "stateless ("sub-state") nations" or "side nations" has appeared (Tiryakian and Connor 1995). The revision of last publication on the topic allows us to formulate two statements. First, the state always develops as a national (or mono-national) when it does not experience an organized internal ethno-nationalism. Secondly, when internal ethno-nationalism and territorial claims put forward on behalf of one or more ethno-territorial communities, the chosen form of governance will be the result of a "deal" between political elites representing the state as a whole and individual ethnic communities. According to Safran (1999), only a strong state can afford to decide whether to grant territorial autonomy to the region or not. Weak states are most often forced to make concessions in favor of ethnocratic elites. As Hoffmann (2021) considers, administrative maps are often objects of intense political struggles, especially in post-colonial context where they have been imposed on ambiguous and highly heterogeneous cultural and political landscapes. Thus, the ethnic factor in the territorial structure of the state has largely turned out to be a product of the modern system of the world order, the main unit of which is nation-states.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the impact of territorial reform in Ukraine on communities in areas of concentrated settlements of one of the largest ethnic minorities in Ukraine – Romanians, and Moldovans. The article is based on the outcomes of a wide inter-regional study of the processes of territorial reform in areas of concentrated residence of national minorities in Ukraine, carried out in 2017-2020 by the NGO "Association of Public Administration Researchers" with the support of the International Renaissance Foundation.

Despite the existing works devoted to the territorial aspects of ethnicity (ethnic territory, ethnic areas, ethnic enclaves), there are practically no studies aimed at examining the impact of territorial reforms on national minorities. The case of Ukraine is perhaps the only one when territorial reorganization in the XXI century was carried out in the areas of concentrated settlement of ethnic groups, which makes our study actually relevant and unique. An additional novelty to the study is added by an analysis based on the developed methodology for the perception by national minorities of a change in the administrative affiliation of their ethnic territories.

Research Methods

The research algorithm of the research is in obtaining and processing data through the following sequentially implemented research techniques: collection and processing of statistical data on the ethnic composition of territorial units, both before and after the territorial reform in places where Romanians and Moldovans are concentrated; a survey of persons actively involved in the processes of territorial reform as consultants and decision-makers at the political and administrative level to obtain an expert's vision on the tasks of territorial transformation in areas of concentrated residence of Romanians and Moldovans; content analysis of the local media to summarize public opinion on the results of territorial transformations in areas of concentrated residence of Romanians and Moldovans; study of ethnic tolerance in areas of concentrated residence of Romanians and Moldovans in order to reveal the possibilities of non-conflict existence of new territorial units with a mixed ethnic composition of the population.

The study is based on a situational approach which allowed to consider the peculiarities of territorial transformations in the areas with the residence of Romanians and Moldovans (Farr 1985). As the data on the ethnic composition of the population, its linguistic features, distribution by country, region, each territorial unit are collected only during the Censuses, the other objective sources of such data do not exist. The recommendations of the Conference of European Statisticians on censuses and housing identify the issues of ethnic origin and language as optional ones. However, for countries with a large share of national minorities, census data on ethnic and linguistic composition (in combination with other issues) provide unique information for studying ethnic processes in the country. The importance of such information is valued by the Law of Ukraine "On the All-Ukrainian Census" which addresses the issue of ethnic origin and language pecularities of the population taking data of the census.

While conducting this research, we were forced to use the outdated data from the first All-Ukrainian Population Census of 2001. The scholars also make remarks on the representativeness of the first All-Ukrainian census of 2001 in terms of ethnic and linguistic characteristics of the population (Kolodiy 2003).

Within the newly created communities (as a result of the territorial reform of 2020), there are still no practices of statistical observation of the processes taking place in the respective territory.

Under such conditions, expert surveys are a significant source of information. In 2017 we conducted a pilot expert study on the ethno-territorial processes in the Odessa region (Ukraine), which examined the mechanisms for selecting experts and methods in processing the relevant information (Serhiey, Petro, and Natalia 2017). Using its findings in 2020 an expert survey was conducted on the implementation of decentralization policies under conditions of concentrated residence of the Romanian and Moldovan population. Nine groups of experts were selected. They are: representatives of organizations that have implemented projects on an amalgamation of local communities, primarily employees of regional Centers for Local Self-Government Development, created under Ukraine – Local Empowerment, Accountability and Development Programme "U-LEAD with Europe", funded by the European Union; representatives of all-Ukrainian and regional associations of Romanians and Moldovans; councilors of local self-government bodies representing the areas of concentrated residence of Romanians and Moldovans; officials of executive public bodies in the areas of concentrated residence of Romanians and Moldovans.

The expert survey was conducted by "distance questionnaire". To select the questionnaires, the criterion of experts' awareness of the main regulations on ethnic politics and territorial reform was used. In particular, the questionnaires in which the experts were unaware of the provisions of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe, the laws of Ukraine "On National Minorities in Ukraine", "On Voluntary Amalgamation of Local Communities" were not taken into account. As a result, the total number of experts' questionnaires (which were processed in this research) was 86.

In order to determine the prospects for the functioning of communities on a multiethnic basis, in 2020 we also conducted a study on ethnic tolerance in communities with the concentrated residence of Romanian-Moldovan settlement areas, according to the adapted methods used in ethnopolitical research of the 90s (Hodson, Sekulic, and Massey 1994; Mc Intosh et al. 1995).

An additional tool was the content-analysis materials of local self-government decisions on territorial reform and the media in the Romanian-Moldovan settlement area.

Results and Discussion

Romanians and Moldovans in Ukraine are considered to be different ethnic groups, although they are united by one language, features of national traditions and way of life. In Ukraine there are about 250 thousand Moldovans and about 150 thousand Romanians. As it is seen from Figure 1 some areas in the south of Odessa region, south of Zakarpattia (Transcarpathia) region and Chernivtsi region can be considered as ethnic territories of Romanians and Moldovans.
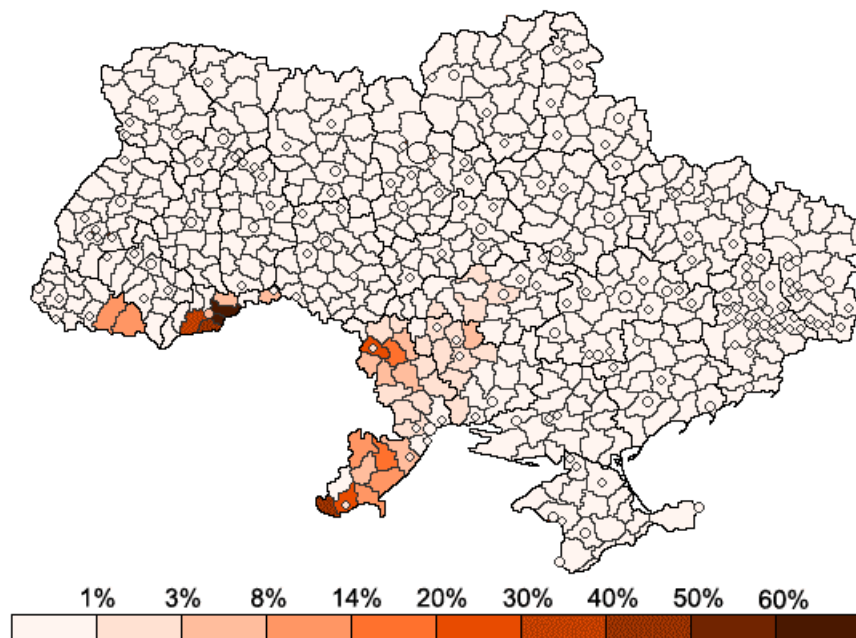
Figure 1. The share of Moldovans and Romanians in the regions of Ukraine, 2015 – developed by the authors using the data of the State Staistic Service
Source: State Statistic Service, 2001

The peculiarity of Romanians and Moldavians' residence in Ukraine is mainly the rural form of settlement. The residence of Romanians and Moldovans in cities is mainly in the administrative centers of the areas of their concentrated residence. As it is indicated in Figures 2-4, prior to the 2020 territorial reform, Moldovans were the largest

ethnic group in the Reni raion of Odessa oblast and Novoselytsia raion in Chernivtsi oblast, with the Romanian population predominating in Hertsa raion of Chernivtsi oblast. Romanians and Moldovans were the second largest ethnic group in the 16 "old" raions. Moldovans are the dominant ethnic group in 64 rural settlements, Romanians dominated at the level of 58 rural settlements, as well as in one city (Hertsa) and 2 villages (Solotvine and Krasnoyil's'k). The Table 2 shows that the total number of communities in the Romanian and Moldavian settlement areas was 87 communities before the 2020 territorial reform.

Table 2. Settlements and communities in areas of concentrated residence of Romanians and Moldovans, 2015 and 2020

Oblasts of Ukraine	Romanians			Modovans		
	Communities		Settlements	Communities		Settlements
	2015	2020		2015	2020	
Zakarpattia oblast	6	1	10	-	-	-
Chernivtsi oblast	35	13	51	20	7	29
Odessa oblast	-	-	-	26	13	35
Totally	*41*	*14*	*61*	*46*	*20*	*64*

Source: processed by the authors
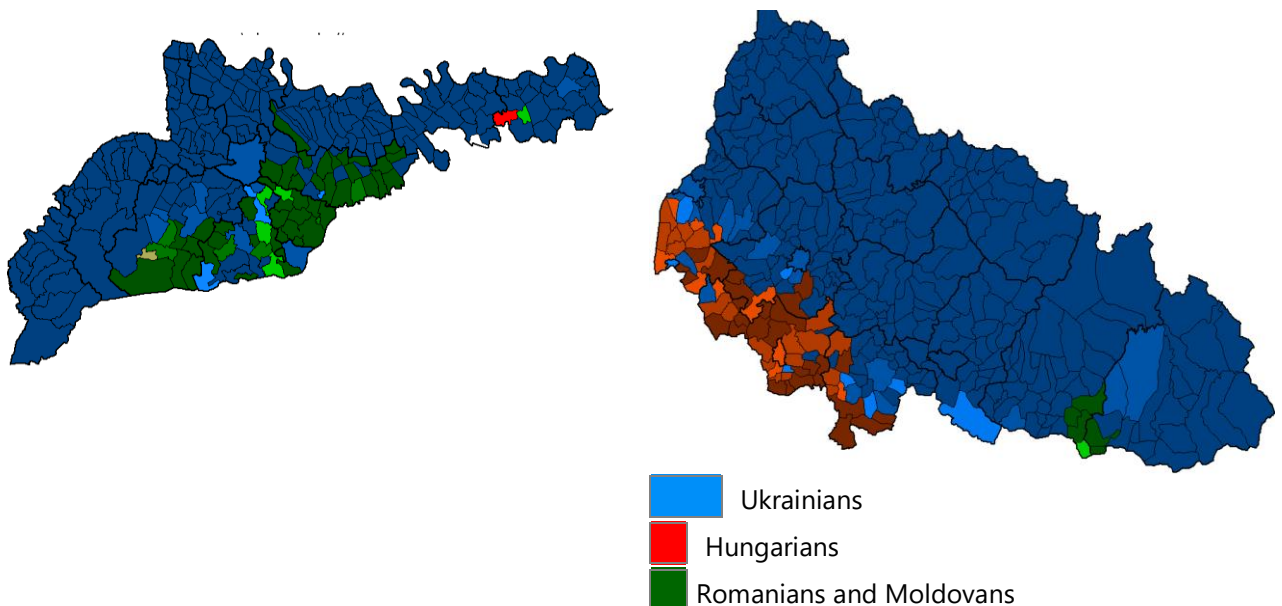
Figure 2. Location of ethnic groups by communities in Chernivtsi oblast, 2015 – developed by the authors using the data of the *Source: State Statistic Service, 2001*

🟦	Ukrainians
🟥	Hungarians
🟩	Romanians and Moldovans

Figure 3. Location of ethnic groups by communities in Zakarpattia oblast, 2015 – developed by the authors using the data of the *Source: State Statistic Service, 2001*
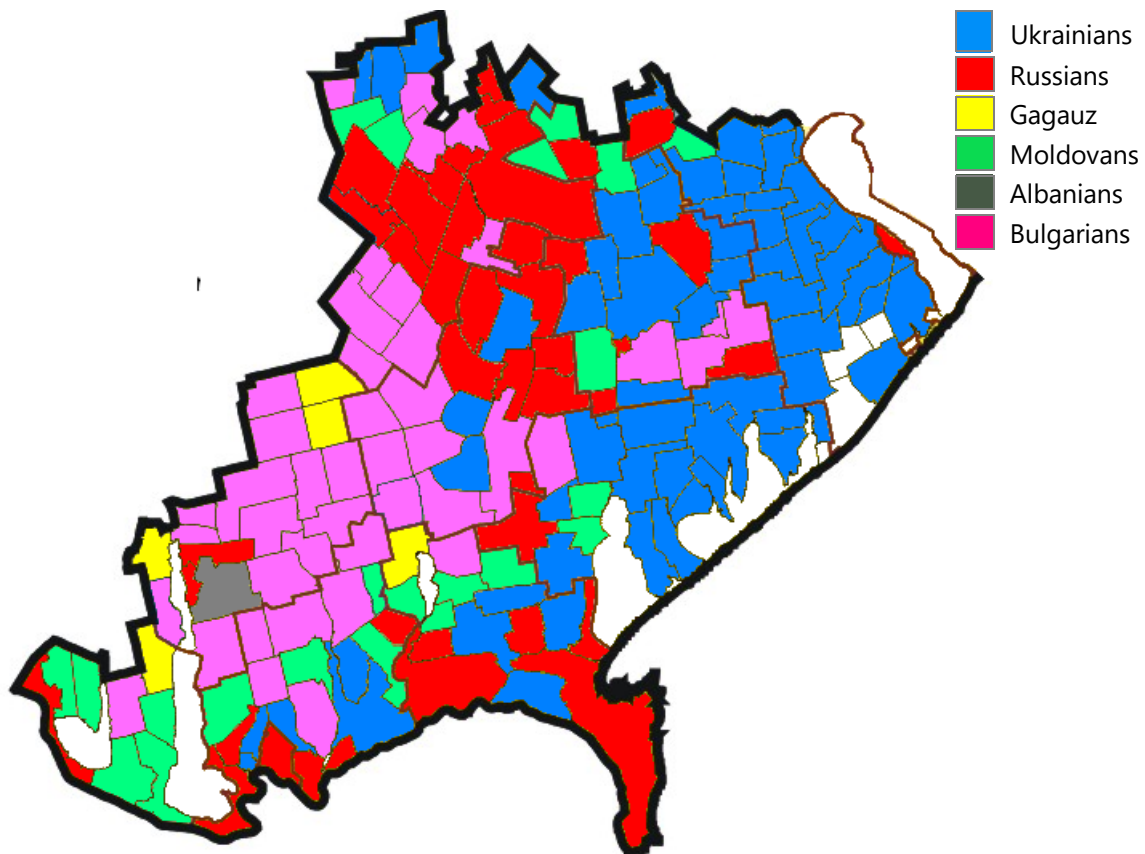
Figure 4. Location of ethnic groups by communities of the southern raions of Odessa oblast, 2015 – developed by the authors using the data of the State Staistic Service
Source: State Staistic Service, 2001

A sign of the high level of ethnic consolidation of Romanians and Moldovans is their high level of proficiency in Romanian language, which, in particular, in 2012-2018 was recognized as official language in 24 communities of Chernivtsi and Zakarpattia oblasts. This was also facilitated by the availability of school education in Romanian language (73 preschools and 78 secondary schools); media in Romanian language (11 publication issues); worship in Romanian language in the areas of concentrated residence of Romanians and Moldovans; the activity of All-Ukrainian, regional and local associations of Romanians and Moldovans; established ties with Romania and Moldova as kin-states. It should be noted that due to the repeal of the Law of Ukraine "On the Principles of State Language Policy", the regional status of the Romanian language in the respective communities and raions was abolished. Also, in accordance with the amendments to the educational legislation of Ukraine, beginning from 2023, the provision of school education in the languages of ethnic minorities will be stopped (Maksimovtsova 2017).

As a result of territorial reform in 2015-2020 in areas of concentrated residence of Romanians and Moldovans, there are significant changes in the territorial division. At the beginning of 2020, the existing 87 communities with a dominant Romanian and Moldovan population were included in 34 new communities. As a result, the communities of several types were formed in terms of ethnic composition: 9 monoethnic communities, in which the percentage of Romanian and Moldovan population exceeds 90%, and in their structure there are no settlements with other ethnic groups: Solotvyno community of Zakarpattia oblast (Romanians), Hertsa,

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Ostrytsia, Volokiv, Karapchiv, Tereblev, Petrovets, Chudey (Romanians), Boyany (Romanians and Moldovans) communities of Chernivtsi oblast; 7 bi-ethnic communities with the relative dominance of Romanians or Moldovans, which include some non-Roman settlements: Sucheveny, Krasnoyil's'k (Romanians), Magal's'k, Mamalygivska, Vanchikivtsi, Novoselytsya communities of Chernivtsi oblast, Petropalivs'k community of Odessa region (Moldovans); 5 bi-ethnic communities which include Romanian and Moldovan settlements, but their percentage exceeds 20%: Vashkivtsi, Toporivka, (Moldovans), Tarashany, Hlybotska (Romanians) communities of Chernivtsi oblast; Novoselivka community (Moldovans) of Odessa oblast; 9 communities, which include settlements with Romanian and Moldovan population, but their percentage is less than 20%: Starozhynets, Kamianka (Romanians) communities of Chernivtsi oblast; Kuyalnyk, Ananyiv, Podil's'k, Tatarbunary, Tarutyne, Borodino, Starokozache (Moldovans) communities of Odessa oblast; 4 multiethnic communities, which include settlements with various ethnic composition and each of the ethnic groups does not constitute an absolute majority: Reni (Moldovans, Russians, Bulgarians, Gagauz), Safyanivka (Ukrainians, Russians, Bulgarians, Moldovans), Suvorove (Bulgarians, Russians), Moldovans), Kiliya (Ukrainians, Russians, Moldovans) communities of Odessa oblast.

Due to a significant increase of raions in the average level of territorial division, the percentage of Romanian and Moldovan population in areas of their traditional residence has decreased significantly and only in Chernivtsi raion it succeeds 25%.

One of the most fundamental issues in the process of amalgamation of communities and raions was compliance with the Law of Ukraine "On Voluntary Amalgamation of Local Communities" in terms of historical, natural, ethnic, cultural and other factors affecting socio-economic development of the amalgamated local community. The majority of the interviewed experts considered that these criteria were mostly met. However, about 15% of experts, primarily those representing ethnic associations and members of local councils, confirmed that these criteria were not always met. It was noted that while providing the reform process, the views of ethnic associations, the linguistic characteristics of the communities, their religious affiliation were not taken into account. That resulted in the amalgamation of communities with different ethnic composition. The vast majority of experts were rather skeptical about the effectiveness of the public discussion of plans on an amalgamation of communities and raions. It was noted that the citizens' meetings were formal, nobody knew about them, there was a conspiracy between community leaders, and there was pressure from authorities.

When asked "What should the process of territorial division arrangement be, if the creation of an economically and financially capable community is done through the amalgamation of neighboring communities, which are dominated by various ethnic groups?", most experts, as Figure 5 demonstrates, favored such amalgamation.
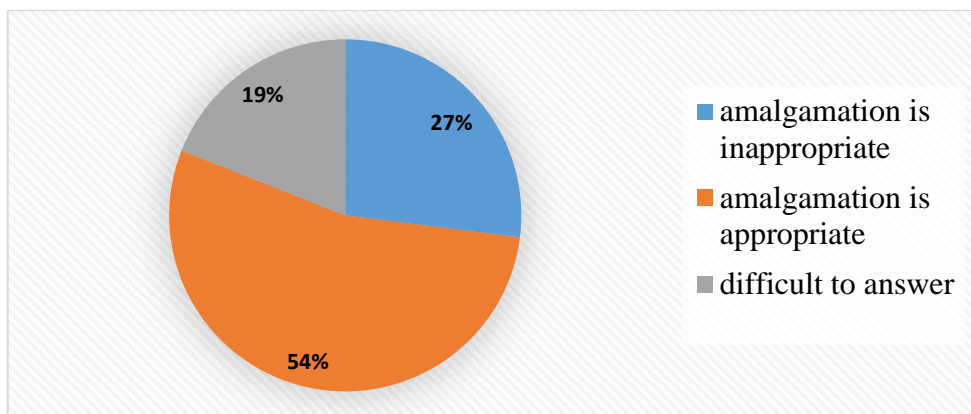
Figure 5. What should the process of territorial division arrangement be, if the creation of an economically and financially capable community is done through the amalgamation of neighboring communities, which are dominated by various ethnic groups?
Source: processed by the authors

On the contrary, the representatives of ethnic associations and community leaders insisted on the inexpediency of such amalgamation. They named the following reasons for inexpediency: the possibility of ethnic contradictions and tensions; the impossibility to form a system of native language upbringing and education; the impossibility to conduct local council meetings when deputies speak different languages; at the elections of the community mayor and councilors, the voters will mostly elect the representative of their ethnic group, contrary to his/her business qualities; ties with the kin-state will be weakened; land, financial, etc. contradictions will acquire ethnic character.

Against this background, the overwhelming majority of experts, as it is shown in Figure 6, supported the position on the expediency of amalgamation of several neighboring communities into one community with only one dominating ethnic group.
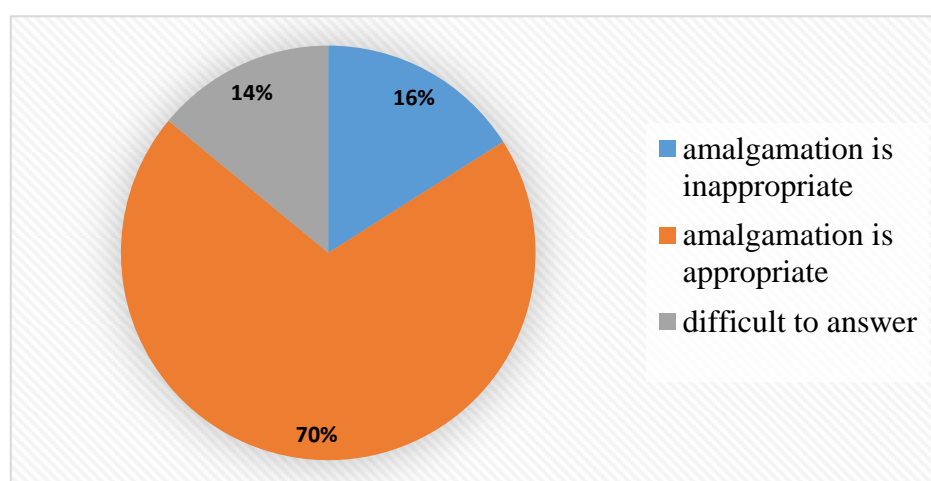
Figure 6. Is it expedient to amalgamate into one territorial community several adjacent territorial communities in which one national minority dominates even under the condition of the remoteness of the administrative center of the community?
Source : developed by the authors

The experts named the following reasons for inexpediency: restricted access to the community center and worse quality of public services provided; a threat of an ethnic enclave, which will lead to separatism. At the same time, the experts generally agreed that if communities with different dominant ethnic groups were united, interethnic relations would remain unchanged.

Among the convincing arguments in favor of amalgamated communities with different ethnic groups, the experts noted: that nothing will prevent an amalgamated community to support ethnic traditions; the ethnic composition of the population will not in any way affect the quality of services to be provided by local self-government; additional funds will appear in the community, which will be directed, also on the development of culture and traditions of ethnic groups; there will be large schools in the communities, which will allow forming "ethnic" classes (in case of their need), which is impossible in small communities; communities will have more opportunities to gain experience in interethnic interaction, which will lead to harmonization of interethnic relations.

There were questions on the reform of the raion level of territorial division. The experts mostly repeated the positive and negative consequences (similar to those concerning communities).

Regarding the question on an amalgamation of adjacent raions or their territorial parts into one raion (which will result in the creation of one raion) dominated by one ethnic group, the opinions of the experts were split almost in half. The experts mentioned the following reasons for inexpediency: an ethnic enclave will be created, which will lead to manifestations of separatism and inhibition in the formation of a single Ukrainian nation; such an area will become a base for individual politicians and political forces who use the "ethnic map".

The experts also had a rather negative attitude towards national-cultural (as Figure 7 indicates) and national-territorial (as it is shown in Figure 8) autonomy as forms of solving ethnic problems. At the same time, in Ukraine, in the public consciousness (traumatized by the events in Crimea and eastern Ukraine), the concept of "autonomy" has a mostly negative connotation and is identified with separatism and violation of territorial integrity. That, in our opinion, affected the results of the survey.
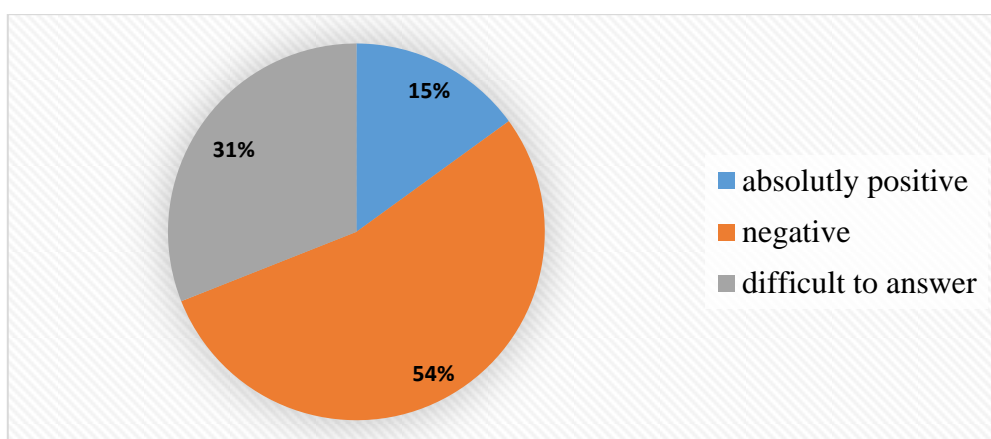

Figure 7. Attitude to cultural autonomy (in solving the problems of national development through national associations to which the relevant powers are delegated) in modern Ukraine
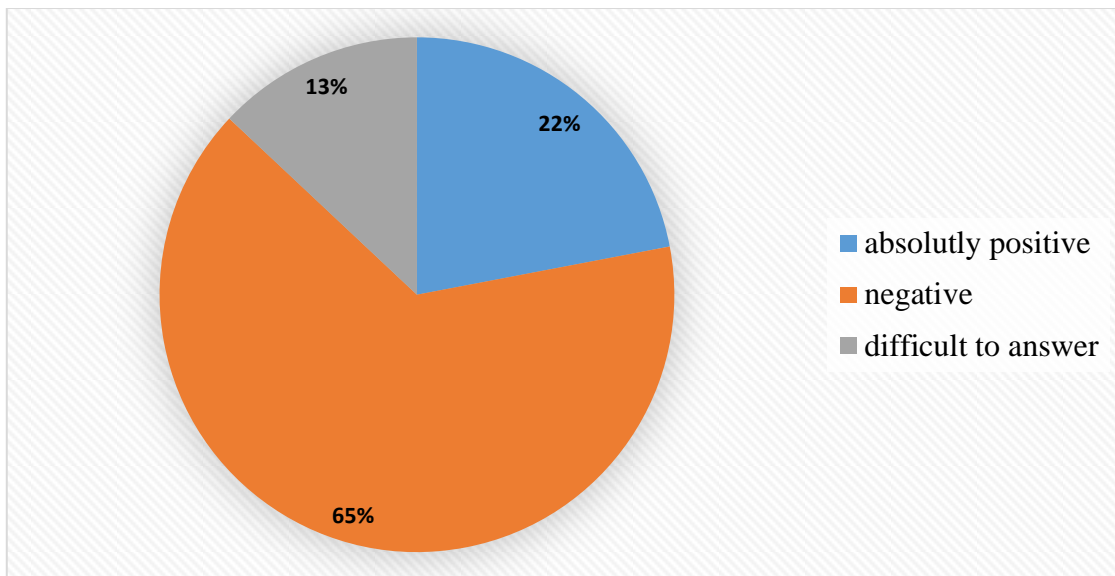*Source : developed by the authors*

Figure 8. Attitude to territorial autonomy (solving problems of national development through national territorial units) in the conditions of modern Ukraine
Source : developed by the authors

Among the legal and organizational mechanisms that can ensure the coordination and implementation of the specific interests of ethnic groups within the communities (as well as within a raion and an oblast) in the process of territorial reform, the experts point out the necessity: to create a neighbourhood council and/or a starosta (a head of the settlement) with delegation of authorities on cultural development in the settlements of the community, which differ in their ethnic characteristics from the administrative center of the community; to fix quotas for ethnic minorities in the electoral lists of political parties (by analogy with quotas for women); to create constituencies for elections to local councils, taking into account the concentrated residence of ethnic groups; to delegate to ethnocultural associations some competencies in the field of culture and education; to include in the executive bodies of the communities a representative of ethnic associations; to give the official status to minority languages in the areas of concentrated residence of ethnic minorities; to develop specific curricula on the culture of ethnic minorities at schools; to promote an active policy on cooperation with kin-states; to create advisory bodies of ethnic minorities at the governmental authorities; to provide an additional subvention from the State budget to communities which have ethnic composition; to intensify inter-community cooperation between neighboring communities on the development of ethnic minority culture in order to maintain national folklore groups by several communities and the possibility of forming schools with teaching in languages of ethnic minorities.

In order to determine the sustainability of community development in the area of Romanians and Moldovans settlements and the prospects for their preservation, a study on ethnic tolerance of these ethnic groups was conducted. The study included communities consisting of several settlements dominated by different ethnic groups (the first ethnic group in the community indicates its dominance), including: Ukrainian-Romanian - 1 (Tarashaniv community, Chernivtsi oblast); Romanian-Ukrainian - 1 (Sucheva community, Chernivtsi oblast); Ukrainian-Moldovan - 1 (Vashkovets community, Chernivtsi oblast); Moldovan-Ukrainian - 1 (Petropavlivs'k community, Odessa oblast); multiethnic - Rheni community (Moldovans, Russians, Bulgarians,

Gagauz); Safyany community (Russians, Moldovans, Bulgarians, Ukrainians) Odessa oblast.

The communities where all settlements within the community are Romanian and Moldovan were also taken for comparison: Volokiv community (Chernivtsi oblast) and Solotvyne community (Transcarpathian oblast).

Totally 30-50 people were interviewed in each community (436 in total). The sample is representative by age, gender, ethnicity. The error of representativeness with a confidence level of 0.95: not more than 1.4%.

Ethnic tolerance means tolerance to "otherness", to other values, other people's way of life, traditions, culture, customs, thoughts; readiness to constructive interaction; respect to members of other ethnic groups; ability to show patience; positive attitude to one's own and other peoples; active position in establishing mutual understanding and mutual respect; positive interaction with other ethnic groups.

The questions of the questionnaire were traditional in terms of studying the ethnic situation (see Table 3).

Table 3. The questionnaire on ethnic tolerance

No	I am a person who...	Agree	Mostly agree	Agree somehow	Mostly disagree	Disagree
1.	prefers the way of life of his people, but with great interest in other peoples					
2.	considers that interethnic marriage destroys the people					
3.	often feels the superiority of people of another ethnic group					
4.	considers that the rights of the ethnic group are always superior to human rights					
5.	considers that eethnicity does not matter in everyday communication					
6.	prefers the lifestyle of only his/her people					
7.	usually does not hide his/her ethnic group					
8.	believes that true friendship can exist only between people of the same ethnic group					
9.	often feels ashamed of people belonging to his/her ethnic group					
10.	believes that any means is good to protect the interests of his/her people					
11.	does not give preference to any ethnic culture, including his/her own culture					
12.	often feels the superiority of his/her people over others					
13.	loves own people, but respects the language and culture of other peoples					
14.	considers it strongly necessary to preserve the "purity" of the ethnic group					
15.	gets hardly along with people of his/her ethnic group					
16.	believes that interacting with people of other ethnic					

	groups is often a source of trouble					
17.	is indifferent to his/her ethnic group					
18.	experiences stress when hearing different language around him/her					
19.	is ready to deal with a representative of any people, regardless of ethnic differences					
20.	believes that his/her people have the right to solve their problems at the expense of other people					
21.	often feels inferiority because of his/her ethnic group					
22.	considers his/her people more gifted and developed in comparison with other peoples					
23.	believes that people of other ethnic groups should be limited in the right to reside in his/her ethnic territory					
24.	gets irritated at close contact with people of other ethnic groups					
25.	always finds an opportunity to reach an agreement peacefully in an inter-ethnic dispute					
26.	considers it necessary to "cleanse" the culture of his/her people from the influence of other cultures					
27.	does not respect his/her people					
28.	believes that on his/her (land) territory of concentrated residence of his/her ethnic community, it should have all the rights to use natural and social resources (the resources should belong only to his/her people)					
29.	never considered inter-ethnic issues seriously					
30.	believes that his/her people are no better and no worse than other peoples					
31.	considers Ukraine his/her homeland, although he/she is not a Ukrainian by ethnic					
32.	considers his/her homeland not Ukraine, but another State					
33.	believes that the ethnicity of the senior official does not matter, the main thing is business qualities					
34.	believes that in the process of territorial reform, local communities with different ethnic compositions can amalgamate					
35.	considers it important in the process of territorial reform to preserve mainly the existing ethnic composition of the community (urban, rural)					

Source: processed by the authors

While processing the questionnaires, the answers were given the following points: "Agree" - 5 points; "Rather agree" - 4 points; "I agree with something; I don't agree with anything" - 3 points; "Rather disagree" - 2 points; "Disagree" - 1 point. The number of points for each of the types of ethnic identity was calculated (in parentheses there are the items that are appropriate for this type): ethnonigilism which is the estrangement from one's own ethnic group and the search for stable socio-psychological niches not by ethnic criteria (3, 9, 15, 21, 27); ethnic indifference which is the erosion of ethnic identity, expressed in the uncertainty of ethnicity, the irrelevance

of ethnicity (5, 11, 17, 29, 30, 33, 34); positive ethnic identity which is a combination of a positive attitude towards the "own" people with a positive attitude towards other people (1, 7, 13, 19, 25, 31); ethnoegoism which is a type of identity expressed through the prism of the category "my people" and involves some irritation in relations with members of other ethnic groups (6, 12, 16, 18, 24); ethno-isolationism which is the belief in the superiority of one's own ethnic group, xenophobia (2, 8, 20, 22, 26, 35); ethno-fanaticism which is the willingness to take any action in the name of understandable ethnic interests, denying other peoples' rights to use the resources of the territory, recognizing the priority of ethnic rights over human rights, and justifying any sacrifices in the struggle for the welfare of one's own people (4, 10, 14, 23, 28, 32).

In general, the results of the survey of the respondents (regardless of ethnic group and type of settlement) were distributed as it is shown in Figure 9:
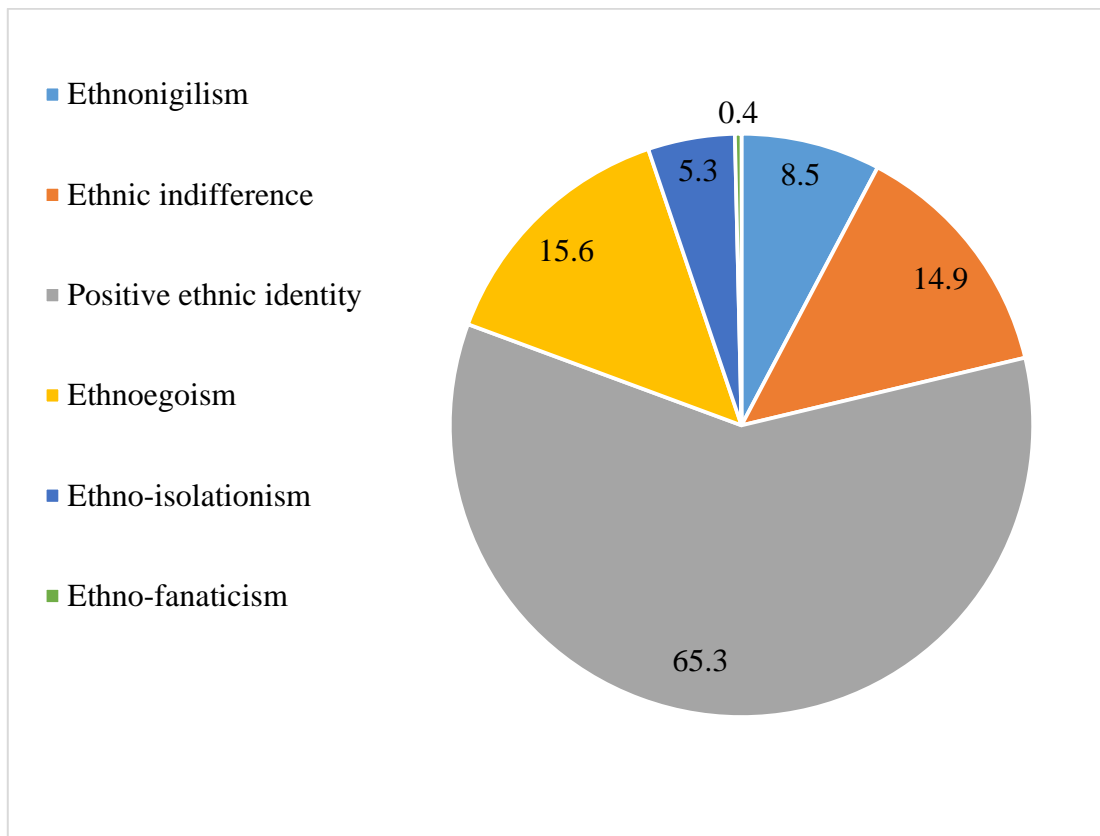
Figure 9. Indicators of ethnic tolerance in the communities of Romanian-Moldovan settlement areas

Source : Source: processed by the authors

Thus, the population of territorial communities in the areas of Romanian-Moldovan settlement is generally characterized by a positive ethnic identity, which combines a positive attitude to their ethnicity and to other ethnic groups while living together. The Figure 10 demonstates the results of the survey in the monoethnic Romanian and Moldovan communities and Figure 11 shows the results of the survey of local mixed communities are as following:
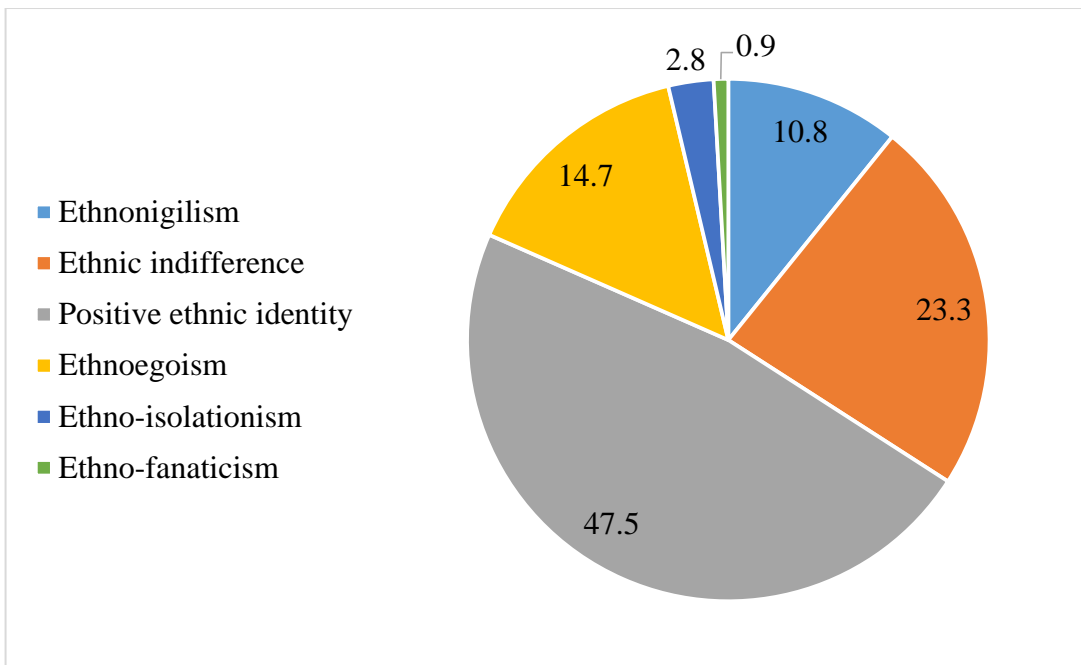
Figure 10. The results of the survey in the monoethnic Romanian and Moldovan communities
Source: processed by the authors
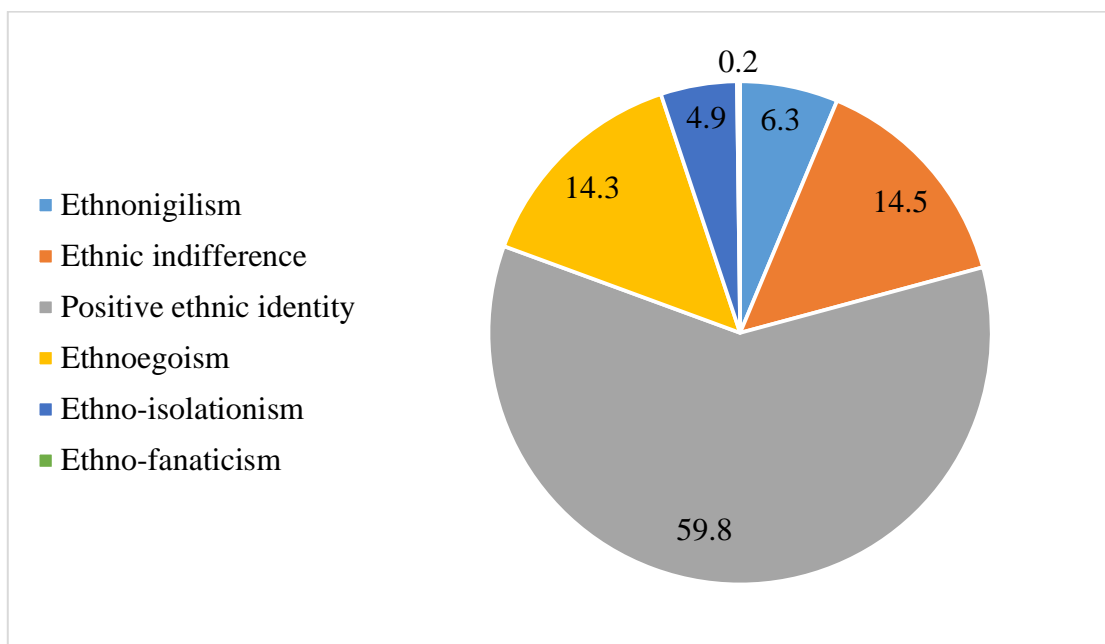
Figure 11. The results of the survey of local mixed communities
Source: processed by the authors

Thus, Romanians and Moldovans, both in general and by type of settlement, are characterized by a positive ethnic identity. The level of positive ethnic identity is somewhat higher in local communities, whose settlements are characterized by the dominance of various ethnic groups. That suggests a fundamental possibility for further sustainable development of communities with different dominant ethnic groups.

Conclusion

In 2015-2020 following the territorial reform in Ukraine, on the whole, the ethno-political balance was preserved. The enlarged communities and, to a lesser extent, enlarged raions made it possible to preserve the integrity of the areas with concentrated residence of Romanians and Moldovans. The boundaries of new territorial units, as a rule, correspond to the ethnic boundaries of the Romanian and Moldovan population. Some deviations and formation of ethnically mixed communities are a consequence of, first, Romanians and Moldovans enclaves in the areas of other ethnic groups, or, secondly, conversely, the presence of other ethnic enclaves in the areas of Romanians and Moldovans recidents. Long-term traditions of peaceful coexistence and a high level of ethnic tolerance (among Romanians and Moldovans, and in the whole area of their concentrated residence) testify that new territorial units, being formed predominantly "top-down", after a while will be perceived not as artificial and imposed, but as "ours" and natural.

At the same time, the current state of the territorial system in Ukraine is characterized as a transitional one. At the expertise and governmental levels, the directions (sometimes directly opposite ones) of improving the existing territorial structure are being discussed.

At the same time, there are approaches aimed to divide the single territories of concentrated residence of ethnic minorities between several territorial units in order to dissolve ethnic groups in the Ukrainian ethnic environment and homogenize the Ukrainian nation.

Under the conditions of potential inter-ethnic conflicts in Ukraine, not single actions of the government which do not meet European and international standards on the protection of minorities in such spheres as language and education, can lead to ethnic confrontation.

On the other hand, the tendency to mono-ethnicity (as the amalgamation of the larger part of the ethnic community within one administrative unit of the higher than the village and township level) will inevitably manifest itself in the process of territorial division. In the context of territorial reform, special attention should be paid to the expediency to preserve the integrity of microsocial systems formed on the basis of few ethno-national minorities in Ukraine. Any territorial reform should pay attention to the feasibility of preserving the integrity of local communities, which are mainly ethno-national in their nature, according to their will, primarily based on the principle of eliminating internal factors of disorganization, that is confrontation within interethnic principles.

The fact that the community as a *territorial unit* of the primary level (in accordance with the model of local self-government implemented in Ukraine) is based on the community as a *social group*, is appropriate in the regions with polyethnic population, including areas with Romanians and Moldovans, to focus on an amalgamation of territorial units characterized by the same ethnic characteristics into one community and raion.

Being based on the provisions of national and international law on interethnic relations, the following key approaches are to be taken into consideration in the process of territorial reform resulting from the concentrated residence of ethnic minorities: the main purpose of creating communities in the areas of concentrated residence of national minorities is to develop a socio-economic basis for sustainable development of the respective territories aiming to preserve the living environment of ethnic groups and provide conditions for their free and comprehensive development;

the inadmissibility in ignoring the principle of voluntariness, the obligation to consider the opinions of ethnic communities; the refraining (while providing territorial reforms) from the measures that unreasonably and (or) without the consent of ethnic groups change the ethnic and ethno-linguistic structure of the population of the respective territorial units and may lead to the restriction of collective and (or) individual rights and freedoms; the focus on ethnic and cultural diversity, considering the specific needs of socio-cultural development of ethnic groups in communities; the strict compliance with the constitutional human and civil rights; preservation and development of local (within the territory of historical settlethe ment of minorities) and supralocal (within a region, Ukraine and abroad) interethnic relations; the creation of a system of territorial arrangement of public power, which is capable to respect the specific needs of each ethnic community and to pursue a targeted national ethnic policy; taking into account the influence of geopolitical factors.

The interests of ethnic groups in the process of territorial transformation should be taken into account through public administration decisions, based on the model and forms of ethnic groups' interests in the process of territorial transformation, through the administration of appropriate policy on reorganization of the territorial and administrative system. The complex nature of territorial reform also necessitates the creation of a system of informational and analytical support of territorial transformations in Ukraine, which provides monitoring of the territorial management system, analysis of external and internal problems in the process of reforming and forecasting their development.

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