https://doi.org/10.59295/crs2024.04 **CZU: 316.3(477):355.4**

STUDYING THE CONSOLIDATION OF SOCIETY IN UKRAINE DURING THE WAR

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Summary

This study examines the consolidation of Ukrainian society, which has been confronted with Russian military threats since 2014. Highlighting the role of cultural factors in this process allows for a deeper understanding of ideological underpinnings of both collective and individual consciousness, as well as the behavioral patterns within ethnocultural and national contexts, which have enabled Ukrainians to mount a heroic resistance against Russia's aggression. A detailed analysis of the characteristics and trends in the consolidation of Ukrainian society draws on data from the annual sociological monitoring conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (NASU) since 1992 and surveys conducted by the Sociological Group "Rating" in 2022.

Keywords: consolidation of society, cultural factors, civic self-identification, national mentality, dominant values.

It is essential to study the consolidation of society, not only from an academic perspective but also for its practical significance in light of the challenges Ukrainian society is currently facing. The importance of examining the consolidation of Ukrainian society, which has been confronted with Russian military threats since 2014, and more acutely since the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022, has become increasingly apparent. Highlighting the role of cultural factors in this process allows for a deeper understanding of ideological underpinnings of both collective and individual consciousness, as well as the behavioral patterns within ethnocultural and national contexts, which have enabled Ukrainians to mount a heroic resistance against Russia's aggression.

In the process of the country's sociocultural consolidation, it is crucial to recognize that the diverse historical experiences of Ukraine's regions have shaped the sociocultural and linguistic characteristics of their populations. Before 2022, sociologists noted significant regional disparities within Ukrainian society, with varying views on the country's future, overall condition, culture and achievements depending on the region. However, these interregional differences are now diminishing. Various sociological studies show that the Russia's war against Ukraine has significantly transformed and united Ukrainian society. While this unity is not absolute, one can observe specific dynamics and features of society's consolidation during the war.

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A key factor in consolidating society is the process of civic self-identification. According to monitoring by the NASU Institute of Sociology, over the past three decades, the proportion of people who primarily identify as citizens of Ukraine has increased by 34%, now reaching nearly 80%. In particular, during 2022, civic self-identification grew by 17%. At the same time, there has been a parallel 17% decrease in the proportion of those identifying locally as residents of a village, district or city from 1992 to 2023. The 2023 monitoring data indicates that civic identity has now become overwhelmingly dominant.

Table 1. **The dynamics of territorial and civic identities, % [1].**

Territorial and civic identities	Monitoring wave		
	November, 2021	December, 2022	June, 2023
A resident of the village, district, or city where one lives	20.8	7.9	7,4
A resident of the region (province or several provinces) where one lives	5.6	1.7	2.5
A citizen of Ukraine	62.6	79.7	79.5
A representative of one's ethnicity, nation	2.7	3.9	2.9
A citizen of the former Soviet Union	2.8	1.4	1.1
A citizen of Europe	0.9	1.6	2.3
A citizen of the world	3.1	3.3	3.1
Other (please, specify)	1.6	0.6	0.7

Key trends include a notable rise in national civic identification and a decline in local self-identification following the Orange Revolution, Euromaidan and the full-scale Russian invasion. The events related to Russia's aggression in Crimea and Donbas in 2014 marked a crucial phase of national-civic consolidation in Ukrainian society, establishing civic identity as predominant. However, as Dembitskyi observes, this was soon followed by a period of national-civic fragmentation, marked by intensified socio-political divides (linguistic, political and religious) that have long existed in independent Ukraine. Additionally, the consequences of the large-scale war have introduced new divides related to migration and mobilization. Despite this, Dembitskyi points out that "unlike the earlier stage of political polarization, primarily driven by geopolitical divides (now lessened), the issues of national-civic fragmentation do not endanger Ukrainian statehood. Instead, they pose challenges to the democratic development of our country, and addressing them successfully will be essential for building a modern Western society in Ukraine" [2].

According to the Sociological Group "Rating" data from 2022, if given the choice to support Ukraine's declaration of independence, an overwhelming 97% of respondents would do so. This represents a significant increase from 62% in 2012. In the study, participants were asked to provide three words describing their vision for Ukraine's future. The most frequently cited first word was "free", with other common descriptors including "strong", "flourishing", "prosperous", "peaceful" and "happy". The second most common characteristic was "independent", followed by "wealthy". Additional descriptors included "European", "developed" and "united" [3].

Researchers from the Sociological Group "Rating" observe that "youth are more likely to envision a future Ukraine as free, independent and strong; middle-aged respondents see it as peaceful, prosperous and successful; while older individuals view it as wealthy, flourishing and happy" [3]. Additionally, there are notable gender differences: men more frequently picture Ukraine's future as free, independent, strong, progressive, democratic and European, free from corruption, whereas women tend to envision it as wealthy, flourishing, peaceful, happy and invincible" [3].

One factor currently receiving significant attention in the study of sociocultural consolidation is the concept of national mentality. This concept is intricately linked to the distinctiveness of national culture, values and mental-spiritual orientations, which form the foundation of one's holistic way of life. A crucial aspect of national mentality is the axiological system. As a universal framework of priorities that shapes the desired life project and individual orientation, the axiological-cultural component gives national mentality its qualitative character. National mentality, as a collection of values, mirrors a complex set of socially significant principles that influence individual and group perceptions, relationships, behavior and actions in various social contexts. It includes the elements of culture that help individuals navigate the economic, political and sociocultural dimensions of today's life. This mentality is characterized by axiological-motivational attitudes towards authority, norms, social interaction standards and more.

According to monitoring data from the NASU Institute of Sociology, there are significant trends in the shifting values within Ukrainian mentality [1]. These national surveys reveal that Ukrainian mentality is predominantly influenced by vital (traditional) values related to health, family, children and well-being [1]. Ruchka A. identifies this dominant value syndrome as "security", which emphasizes ensuring existential safety, valuing human life and fostering interpersonal relationships. Conversely, values associated with the "social comfort" syndrome ("a favorable moral-psychological state of society", "equal opportunities for all", "social equality", "national-cultural revival" and "participation in religious life"), along with self-realization values under the "self-realization" syndrome, including "interesting job", "social recognition", "education", "cultural competence" and "individual autonomy", are considered secondary by the Ukrainian population.

Since 2014, there has been a growing emphasis on democratic and political-civic values, associated with the "democracy" syndrome. These include "state independence", "equal opportunities for all", "freedom to express political and other opinions without fear", "criticism and democratic oversight of authorities", "democratic development", "entrepreneurial initiative" and "engagement in political parties and public organizations" [4]. Data from 2014-2023 indicate that Ukrainian values have increasingly prioritized state independence, patriotism, communication, tolerance, solidarity and the strengthening of social bonds. This shift has the potential to positively enhance overall solidarity within Ukrainian society, particularly during times of war.

A heuristic perspective on transforming the post-Soviet axiological-normative system is offered by Golovakha. He suggests that each dominant value within Ukrainian society contains elements that could if addressed, shift the post-Soviet axiological system closer to European norms. Golovakha explains that the dominant value of egalitarianism encompasses not only the principle of "dividing everything evenly" but also the concept of equivalence in social exchange, where individuals receive benefits based on their social contributions [5]. He argues that replacing the value of careerism with that of professionalism could promote self-realization. Additionally, examining the value of isolationism highlights its role in condemning aggression as a means of resolving social conflicts. Golovakha believes that this widely held value in Ukrainian society could be gradually leveraged to "develop tolerance in today's European sense of the term" [5].

In Ukraine, conservatism as a component of both individual and collective consciousness plays a vital role in safeguarding the state and society "from risky geopolitical decisions and deviating from the established post-Soviet path towards European integration. Nevertheless, the values of conservatism can be shifted towards the values of tradition, which can support progress" [5]. This perspective is consistent with Golovakha's view that "the value of social irresponsibility, which emphasizes personal survival in a hostile environment, should be replaced by a focus on the value of independence, as this is essential for embracing individual responsibility" [5].

As for paternalism, which involves social support for the vulnerable in society and recognizes that they cannot survive without collective solidarity, it "can be transformed into the value of interaction and mutual assistance. In this way, the value of paternalism offers potential for fostering the value of civic mutual aid" [5].

Studying the dominant values and mentality of the Ukrainian population is critical for understanding Ukraine's geopolitical development strategy, particularly its European integration efforts. To advance Ukraine's goal of joining the European Union and achieving a modern society characterized by widespread prosperity, an innovative economy and effective democracy, substantial modernization reforms are needed. These reforms are significantly impacted by factors beyond the economic realm, including prevailing values and other cultural influences.

The World Values Survey (WVS), which collects responses from individuals worldwide about their values and attitudes towards politics, economics and society, reveals insights into today's value mentality of Ukrainians [6]. The 2020 data highlight a strong presence of traditional values in Ukrainian society: 86.3% of respondents deemed family extremely important, with an additional 13% considering it rather important. The next most valued aspect, when combining responses of "extremely important" and "rather important", is the closest social circle (friends and acquaintances), with 34.1% rating it as "extremely important" and 56% as "rather important". Current data show that the importance of family is similarly high across Europe, exceeding 90% in most countries, with Ukraine's figures comparable to those of the Netherlands, Lithuania, Finland and Estonia. Ukraine's ratings for the importance of friends and acquaintances align closely with those of Lithuania and Estonia.

Tolerance is a key value within European societies. In Ukraine, there have been substantial advancements in cultivating a culture of tolerance towards the "other" since gaining independence, though intolerance levels remain relatively high. Research indicates a significant increase over recent decades in the number of Ukrainians willing to accept as neighbors' individuals who use drugs and alcohol, are homosexual or are HIV-positive.

Freedom is one of the most crucial values in the Ukrainian mentality. In 2020, Ukrainians valued freedom more than security and equality: 70% regarded freedom as a more important value, and 31% believed it to be more important than security. This high valuation of freedom in Ukraine aligns closely with its significance in European mentalities.

Despite the challenges faced in Ukrainian democratization, the value of democracy remains robustly high within the Ukrainian national mentality. Research indicates that 66.9% of respondents consider a democratic political system the best for Ukraine. In comparison, Europeans place even greater importance on living under a democratic political system, with 82.6% in Poland, 94.6% in Austria and 95.5% in Germany, among others.

The study also sheds light on attitudes towards human rights. Ukrainians' views on the importance of human rights are comparable to those of Greeks, where 47.8% feel human rights are respected in their country, while 49.8% feel they are not. In Germany, confidence in the respect for human rights is the highest at 91.4%, whereas in Romania, it is the lowest at 29.9%.

Sociocultural consolidation in Ukrainian society suggests that it will be marked by subcultural diversity. In any democratic society, numerous subcultures, whether professional, ideological, ethnic, regional, or religious, interact to create a rich sociocultural tapestry. The variety of these subcultures in Ukraine reflects diverse lifestyles, modes of communication and consumption patterns and differing viewpoints on global events and processes. This presents challenges in both studying these subcultures and ensuring their peaceful coexistence. Sociocultural differentiation is occurring alongside socioeconomic polarization. Wealth disparities directly impact access to cultural resources and the overall quality of life, influencing how different social groups perceive and interpret the world. Besides economic divisions, linguistic and confessional distinctions are also evident in Ukrainian society. The rise of new forms of division intensifies existing sociocultural disparities, leading to a reconfigured sociocultural landscape.

In this context, the consolidation of society may face obstacles from the marginalization of existing subcultures and the promotion of "quick" and "simple" solutions by politically radical groups. The state must guard against turning sociocultural diversity into a pretext for policies that homogenize the sociocultural environment, accompanied by radical measures in culture and historical heritage. Therefore, successful societal consolidation should focus on acknowledging and publicly representing this cultural diversity, rather than succumbing to trends toward homogenization.

War, along with other extreme events in recent Ukrainian history, catalyzes the consolidation of Ukrainian society, underscoring its resilience and civilizational identity. In this regard, sociological research plays a vital role in examining social consolidation and assessing public sentiment in today's Ukrainian society, thereby deepening the existing scientific understanding of its developmental potential. Nonetheless, ongoing empirical research brings up methodological challenges, highlighting the need to develop approaches that accurately capture the state of social consolidation and democratization, as well as the prevailing sociocultural influences within public opinion.

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