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Community identity in the conditions of interstate military-political confrontation: Conceptualisation of the concept

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Abstract. Community identity is understood as a multilevel systemic construct formed as a result of a person's awareness of belonging to a certain community and subjective attitude to this belonging based on a strong emotional connection and inclusion in one's inner world and perception of the norms and values of the community as one's own, which is manifested in the behavioural practices of representatives of certain communities (a citizen of the state, a resident of a certain territorial community, a representative of a certain property, or linguistic and cultural community, etc.). A community is defined on the basis of the common interests of its members, common actions, place, territory, common practices, and circumstances. The key feature of defining a community and distinguishing it from a social group is the subjective importance of belonging to it for the community members. In the context of emergency situations and social transformations, such as the Russian-Ukrainian war, there is a reconstruction, a special way and unique configurations of interaction between community identities, including territorial ones: local, regional, national, global; linguistic, cultural, ethnic, civic, religious, etc. Interaction between these identities occurs in such a way that some become more dominant, manifested, actualised, and they, in turn, can suppress others, enter into competitive interaction with them, or, conversely, highlight, emphasise others, or at least coexist harmoniously. A shared identity can be spontaneously actualised or de-actualised during emergencies. However, it is often based on pre-existing identities and values in society. In times of war, there is a tendency for society to consolidate around a common, clearly defined enemy, a common problem, a common misfortune, a common future, a leader, a territory, etc., through the actualisation of certain community identities. Therewith, this creates threats of internal confrontation, which makes Ukrainian society, to a certain extent, vulnerable and susceptible to the actions of hostile propaganda. The formulated provisions can serve as a basis for developing practical recommendations for local and state authorities, which will help to strengthen the consolidation of society and overcome the consequences of polarisation and socio-political confrontation. This will ultimately have a positive impact on the national security of the country

Keywords: community identity; social identity; civic identity; war; interstate military-political confrontation; interaction of community identities

INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the study is due to the need for a scientifically based explanation of the interaction of community identities, which occurs during the period of

interstate military and political confrontation. The full-scale military invasion of Russian troops on the territory of Ukraine determines changes in a wide spectrum

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of life for both individuals and communities. In particular, this not only refers to the general direction of the state's development but also increases the opportunities for intra-Ukrainian understanding, strengthening the capacity of communities (territorial communities) and citizen activity, improving the economic situation, the lives, and psychological well-being of citizens, consolidating society and strengthening the country's national security. Currently, Ukrainian society demonstrates a fairly high level of consolidation due to the need to strongly oppose a common enemy. However, a number of threats relate to possible trends of disintegration, intensification of conflicts, and confrontations, which can be especially clearly manifested after the end of the acute phase of the war. This can lead to dividing people into "ours" and "others" within the communities themselves, the identification of decentralisation with separatism in the minds of citizens. Thus, the country becomes weaker in front of an aggressive, clearly centralised enemy, which reduces the possibilities of recovery and reconstruction in the post-war period. Potential threats to the country's national security lie in the diversity of identities inherent in Ukrainian society and in the conditions resulting from a full-scale military invasion, such threats may intensify. New processes for citizens, which arose or clearly manifested themselves in the conditions of a full-scale military invasion, increased their disorientation in the social, political, and civil space. This causes an increased need to identify and reconstruct one's own identity as a representative of the communities that seem closer to the person, understandable, obvious, and satisfy the need for self-determination.

Identity responds to political and social changes in the country and in the world. Each time with a change in the social situation, according to the theory of symbolic interactionism, the theory of roles, and social categorisation, those community identities that are most relevant to the current situation are manifested and expressed (Sasse & Lackner, 2019). Since individuals, as carriers of certain identities, are endowed with symbolic power, they can turn to "identity" as a means of group mobilisation to achieve common goals (Ivanov, 2012). In a situation of acute social instability, communities play a decisive role in the self-preservation of the person or group with which they identify. As noted by I. Ivanov (2012), this largely explains the spread of separatism, fundamentalism, ethnocentrism, that is, symptoms of socio-political disorganisation.

There are many scientific workings and approaches to the examination of identity, its types, status, properties, influence on the behaviour of individuals in society and the construction of communities around it. These studies prove the existence of multiple identities and the possibility of their real interaction. However, the issue of the interaction of community identities did not receive a comprehensive and thorough theoretical

understanding, which actualised the need for a comprehensive examination of this topic.

Revealing the issue of the interaction of community identities that arise or are actualised in the conditions of interstate military-political confrontation requires an analysis of the community identity issues (territorial: local, regional, national, global; linguistic-cultural, political-ideological, ethnic, civil, religious, property, etc.) in psychology. It is important to understand the essence of the socio-psychological interaction of identities from the point of view of various scientific approaches, the empirical identification of the level of formation of certain community identities, and the determination of the socio-psychological effects of their interaction in the conditions of interstate military-political confrontation.

The purpose of the study is a justification of the concept of "community identity" and the possibilities of their interaction in conditions of the interstate military-political confrontation. The scientific originality of this paper is the conceptualisation of the concept of "community identity" and the justification of its interaction, including in the conditions of interstate military-political confrontation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study is the concepts of foreign and Ukrainian researchers regarding the nature, essence, and differences of social, collective, community, and common identity. The combination of general scientific and special methods and approaches allowed analysing the problem under study. In particular, a systemic approach, which allows considering the community identity as a whole system, and a structural-functional approach, which involves considering the main elements of the system in the dynamics of their functioning and interaction, are used.

The basis for the study of the interaction of community identities in the conditions of interstate military and political confrontation is the general provisions: 1) the theory of community as a relatively large nominal-real social group, distinguished by the presence of a common feature, which is subjectively substantial for many or most of its carriers (Vasiutynskyi, 2010); 2) about the socio-psychological features of the community, which substantiates the model of the community's collective self-determination (Cohen & Chaffee, 2013; Naydonova, 2012; Palahnyuk, 2022; Vasiutynskyi, 2010); 3) about socio-psychological features of territorial communities (Hubeladze, 2020; Shao *et al.*, 2017; Naydonova, 2012); 4) multi-community landscape concepts to explain various socio-psychological phenomena occurring in the community (Sasse & Lackner, 2019); 5) local and territorial identity (Shao *et al.*, 2017; Dehdari & Gehring, 2022); 6) ethnic and civic identity (Barandiaran *et al.*, 2020; Barrihgtton, 2021, 2022; Fukuyama, 2019; Onuch *et al.*, 2018; Ivanov, 2012; Sasse & Lackner, 2019; Vasiutynskyi, 2010; Zhadan, 2017; Petrovska, 2018, etc.).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is worth outlining the coordinates of the understanding of the community, which researchers often identify with a social group, a territorial community, or even a society, to understand and define the community identity. However, this study supports the definition formulated by V. Vasiutynskyi (2010), in which the community is understood as a relatively large (numerical) nominal-real social group distinguished by a common feature and subjectively substantial for most of its members. Based on V. Vasiutynskyi's (2010) theory of community and its socio-psychological properties regarding the definition of community and its characteristic features, not "properties of changing groups with clear boundaries" (Barth), "actual belonging to the group" (Kelas), or "the presence of social interaction" (Erikson), are taken as a basis for distinguishing community identities, namely the subjective importance of belonging to this group, in this case, the community. For community identity, solidarity, participation, subjective importance, and self-efficacy in the community are more important.

Based on thorough developments of both Ukrainian and foreign researchers in the field of community psychology (Vasiutynskyi, 2010; Naydonova, 2012), the community is considered a conditional association of people who have something in common, for example, a territory, or share the same culture and values and maintain the consistency of their sense of identity; that is, they demonstrate the value and importance of unity with this particular community. A person can belong to several communities at the same time and have several community identities. Researchers define five features based on which a community can be formed and defined: common interests of community members, actions, place, territory, practices, and circumstances.

Community identity is understood as the result of the identification of a person with certain communities, internalisation of community values, norms, and/or interests, which is manifested in the behavioural practices of individuals as representatives of a certain community (for example, as a citizen, a resident of a certain community, as a representative of a certain property or linguistic and cultural community, as a believer, as a representative of a certain ethnic group, etc.). During life, people identify themselves with a number of communities. On this basis, various community identities are formed, actualised, and de-actualised. Community identity is not only a means of defining oneself as a member of a certain community and recognising one's "ours" and "others". It is an indispensable condition for the psychological health of a member of the community and the community as a certain set of people and a mechanism for its adaptation to the changing socio-cultural reality. In acute social crises, including interstate military and political confrontation, the need to reconstruct and change the ways of interaction of community identities, the fading of some and the appearance of new ones that fragment

and structure the community and society as a whole in a new way is actualised. Under such conditions, the interaction of community identities allows for satisfying the need for identification with relevant, meaningful communities and strengthening the sense of belonging and certain certainty in times of relative social instability.

Community identity is formed in response to the process of collective self-understanding and self-determination of community members based on common interests, the subjective importance of community belonging, and opposition to others. Community identity is considered as a personal, relational, and, at the same time, collective phenomenon since the bearer of identity in one way or another is the individual. However, it is formed in interaction with others and manifested both at the individual and intra-community level (in the process of community members interacting, distributing, and reproducing their common identity) and even at the inter-community level (interaction of communities, or rather representatives of different communities who are carriers of the corresponding identity).

In contrast to social identity, community one presupposes the possibility or impossibility of voluntary choosing by a person of their own identifying affiliation. That is the level of free or maximally rational choice that a person is able to make in the social dimension, already assigned to them from birth and the fact of belonging to one or another community (Fukuyama, 2019; Esposito, 2010). For the understanding and explanation of community identity, the principles of collective unity, commonality, unity of the life world or the unity of belonging to a certain community in the context of social and cultural dimensions of identity ("we-identity") are important, which were emphasised by Ye. Bystryts'kyi (2020). The concept of identity has a mandatory and necessary reflexive dimension: the orientation of participants in acts of self-awareness to attribute themselves to this or that community, collective (Bystryts'kyi, 2020). Identity is both a consequence and an element of social interaction because it is formed in a certain sociocultural environment. Community identities are formed on the basis of cultural and symbolic codes, which can be essentialist or constructivist.

Social identity arises not from interpersonal communication between group members but from joint membership in an in-group. Social identity is defined by researchers as a part of an individual's self-concept, which arises from the awareness of one's membership in a group (or groups) together with the value and emotional meaning given to this membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

It is a rather flexible phenomenon that is sensitive to socially substantial changes (Vignoles *et al.*, 2011; Sasse & Lackner, 2019; Kravchuk & Khalanskyi, 2023). Therewith, the question of how deep and radical changes in the configuration of community identities can be are investigated in the following empirical study.

The conditions of a full-scale military invasion and, in general, interstate military-political confrontation lead to reconstruction, a special way and unique configurations of the interaction of community identities, in particular territorial: local, regional, national, global; linguistic-cultural, political-ideological, ethnic, civil, religious, etc. The interaction between these identities occurs in such a way that some identities become more dominant, manifested, and actualised, and they, in turn, can suppress others, enter into competitive interaction with them, or, on the contrary, highlight, emphasise others, or at least coexist harmoniously.

In the conditions of a threat to statehood, it is important to preserve and establish a responsible and capable society and community. This is not just a certain set of residents living in a common territory – in a village, town or city, in a common country. It is primarily a certain social and psychological entity that characterises a place where people live together, these residents themselves, and their relationships. A sense of unity, solidarity, trust, respect, mutual understanding among its members, and community identity facilitates the emergence of such a community. The basis of the manifestation of such an identity is a sense of ownership, in this case, in relation to one's community: territorial, local, or national (Hubeladze, 2020). The actualisation of community identities in wartime conditions can have certain positive socio-psychological consequences, in particular, the development of the human potential of the region and the country, the consolidation of Ukrainian society, the development of community subjectivity, the reduction of psychosocial stress, and the reduction of the risk of antisocial behaviour (Hibernau, 2012; Voropayeva, 2016; Kravchuk & Khalanskyi, 2022).

Having a formed identity in a community is an important prerequisite for its subjectivity, a guarantee of sustainability and development, a sense of pride, self-respect, unity, belonging, and social responsibility among community members. It is necessary and important to use the opportunities of the community itself and its social capital to form a community identity. This study is primarily interested in how people find meaning and a sense of belonging through membership in a social group, which also affects how people and groups behave and interact with others based on such membership.

A discussion of the concept of community identity covers its dimensions and markers, the semantic relationships between different ones within larger classification systems, and the variable meaning that community identities can have for actors in diverse social situations and under changing circumstances.

The definition of the term "community identity" includes any process of community formation and socialisation that leads to clearly defined social formations, although the communicative processes of self-identification and identification with others and the corresponding attitudes are of decisive importance, and the

question of multiple identities acquires even greater importance today (Sterbling, 2019). This issue is especially relevant in a situation of identity threat, which is a full-scale military invasion.

To examine the impact of the interaction of community identities on the further development of society, community, and relations, it is important to distinguish the key meanings of identity: the essential meaning (based on the conditions and properties that community members are endowed with); a representational or ideological sense (based on the application of the categories "ours" and "others") and a relational and interactive sense (based on the processes of interaction between subjects and their environment). X.E. Barandiaran *et al.* (2020) propose to understand collective identity as periodic, cohesive, and coordinated communicative networks of interaction; and that such identities can be represented by: mapping and filtering the corresponding interaction network; delineating a set of communities; identifying the strongly connected components of such communities (core identity) in a directed graph; defining the audience and sources of identity in the community. Strong community identity fosters a sense of mutual obligation among group members and encourages commitment and loyalty to the ingroup, often at the expense of the outgroup.

Community identity is a network of interactions that is both the result and the source of repeated, cohesive, and coordinated communicative interactions between different agents in different communication spaces. It distinguishes oneself from the environment and other identities within the communication sphere. It is supported and defined by a network of interactions between individuals and between the resulting system and its environment. Collective demands arise from this network, define its boundaries and strengthen the network of interaction itself. As X.E. Barandiaran *et al.* (2020) note, the exclusivity of identity and the uniqueness of their configurations and interactions will depend on polarising conflicts that separate it from others. The strength of community identity is determined by the degree of interactive integration or involvement of community members.

It is worth emphasising the distinction of the concept of "community identity" in English-language sources, which describes rather formal belonging to a certain territorial community. Instead, this study considers community identity as a multi-level system construct, which is formed as a result of a person's understanding of their belonging to a certain community and subjective attitude towards this belonging based on a stable emotional connection, inclusion in their inner world, and perception of community norms and values as their own (Korobka, 2019, 2022). A person has as many community identities as there are communities to which belonging is subjectively meaningful to them. Community identity is determined through a sense of

community, territoriality (as the presence of a certain platform for its manifestation), a sense of belonging to the community, responsibility, and self-efficacy.

This study is focused on the examination of the interaction of community identities in the conditions of interstate military-political confrontation, which manifests itself in various spheres of individual and community life. Particularly in the sphere of power-subject interaction, financial and property relations, mass communication, education, migration, security, and environmental spheres.

Researchers identify the following features of community identity. In particular, spontaneous actualisation/deactualisation occurs during emergency situations, but it is quite often based on pre-formed identities and values existing in society. Identity is based on the idea that a community is united by a common destiny. It is a source of norms and rules of behaviour that are often informal but shared by the majority of the community and serve as a reference for community members. It may be extended to those who consider themselves members of the community but were not directly involved in the emergency. Community identity as subjectively meaningful can be long-lasting and not weaken after the end of an emergency. If necessary or relevant to a new situation, it can be actualised and become the central core of social identity again (Drury *et al.*, 2019; Penic *et al.*, 2022).

Based on the proposed definition, community identity is a source of personal and collective perception of one's own and the community's effectiveness. On the other hand, it is actualised and acquires importance due to the sense of community members' own effectiveness. This ensures and strengthens the motivation of community members to help others, and also expands the perception of their own right to receive help and support from their community members.

Scientific/practical value. This paper contributes to the development of the concept of community identity on the basis of subjectively important values belonging to people in a certain social group. It is subjective importance and, therefore, a higher level of involvement, self-investment, and self-efficacy that opens up new perspectives in understanding and forecasting the development of communities and society in general. Formulated provisions can form the basis for forecasting the consequences of the interaction of community identities in conditions of interstate military-political confrontation and developing practical recommendations for local and state authorities, mass media, institutions of higher education, and social services. This, in turn, will contribute to increasing community capacity, developing civil society in Ukraine, strengthening its consolidation, and overcoming the consequences of disintegration, polarisation, and socio-political confrontations. It will ultimately have a positive impact on the state of the country's national security.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper traced the current understanding of community identity as a multi-level system construct that is formed as a result of a person's understanding of their belonging to a certain community and subjective attitude to this belonging on the basis of a stable emotional connection and inclusion in his inner world and perception as his own, community norms and values, manifested in the behavioural practices of representatives of certain communities (a state citizen, a resident of a certain territorial community, a representative of a certain property or linguistic and cultural community, etc.). A community is defined by its members' common interests, actions, place, territory, practices, and circumstances. The key feature of defining a community and distinguishing it from a social group is the subjective importance of belonging to it for community members.

Community identities are cross-structured at the individual, intra-community, and inter-community levels. Different types of community identities (local, regional, national, civic, European, supranational, linguistic-cultural, ethnic, etc.) can compete, conflict, or harmoniously coexist with each other. In the conditions of military and political confrontation, some identities can gain dominant relevance and "oppress" or, on the contrary, "strengthen" others. That is, the hierarchy of community identities can change depending on the content of intra- and inter-community interactions. Under the influence of existential threats, such as war, community identity crystallises and acquires expressive, subjectively meaningful forms of expression.

External military aggression actualises national, ethnic, and/or civic identity. This belonging becomes subjectively meaningful and clearly manifested. Increasing the level of involvement in making financial and property decisions, self-investment of one's own resources, including financial and property, in the development of the community and the country, the desire/willingness to expand knowledge, control the process, and take responsibility increases the feeling of local and national identity, the feeling of involvement, efficiency, and a sense of ownership towards one's community and country.

Under war conditions, civic activity and involvement increase both at the community and national levels, including financial and property involvement and readiness to invest additional resources in the development or restoration of the community and the country. The use of media communication tools affects the interaction of community identities through the actualisation of the emotional sphere, the demonstration and implementation of behavioural models, multivariate media communication between communities, and the specification of media channels depending on the needs of communities.

In the conditions of the war, there are tendencies towards the consolidation of society through

the actualisation of certain community identities. Such a union is possible around a common, clearly defined enemy, problem, trouble, future, leader, territory, etc. Therewith, the threat of increased confrontation within Ukrainian society is observed. Because a strong, actualised community identity simultaneously increases the level of in-group favouritism and out-group opposition. That is, a very clear and often aggressive manifestation of the division into “ours” and “others” can be traced. This makes Ukrainian society

somewhat vulnerable and sensitive to the actions of enemy propaganda.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Ідентичність спільноти в умовах міждержавної військово-політичної конфронтації: концептуалізація поняття

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Анотація. Під ідентичністю спільноти розуміють багаторівневу системну конструкцію, що формується внаслідок усвідомлення людиною своєї належності до певної спільноти та її суб'єктивного ставлення до цієї належності. Це ставлення базується на сильній емоційній прив'язаності, включенні норм і цінностей спільноти до внутрішнього світу людини та їх сприйнятті як власних. Ідентичність спільноти проявляється у поведінкових практиках представників конкретних спільнот (громадянина держави, мешканця певної територіальної громади, представника певної майнової або мовно-культурної спільноти тощо). Спільнота визначається на основі спільних інтересів її членів, спільних дій, місця, території, спільних практик та обставин. Ключовою ознакою визначення спільноти та відмежування її від соціальної групи є суб'єктивна значущість належності до неї для членів спільноти. В умовах надзвичайних ситуацій та суспільних трансформацій, якими є російсько-українська війна, відбувається реконструкція, особливий спосіб та унікальні конфігурації взаємодії ідентичностей спільнот, зокрема територіальних: локальних, регіональних, національних, глобальних; мовних, культурних, етнічних, громадянських, релігійних тощо. Взаємодія між цими ідентичностями відбувається таким чином, що одні стають більш домінуючими, проявленими, актуалізованими, а вони, в свою чергу, можуть пригнічувати інші, вступати з ними в конкурентну взаємодію, або, навпаки, виокремлювати, акцентувати інші, чи, принаймні, гармонійно співіснувати. Спільна ідентичність може спонтанно актуалізуватися або деактуалізуватися під час надзвичайних ситуацій. Але досить часто вона базується на попередньо сформованих ідентичностях та цінностях, що існують у суспільстві. В умовах війни спостерігаються тенденції до консолідації суспільства навколо спільного чітко визначеного ворога, спільної проблеми, бід, спільного майбутнього, лідера, території тощо через актуалізацію певних ідентичностей спільноти. Водночас це створює загрози внутрішньоукраїнського протистояння, що робить українське суспільство певною мірою вразливим і чутливим до дій ворожої пропаганди. Сформульовані положення можуть стати основою для розробки практичних рекомендацій для органів місцевої та державної влади, що сприятиме посиленню консолідації суспільства та подоланню наслідків поляризації і суспільно-політичних протистоянь. Це в кінцевому підсумку матиме позитивний вплив на національну безпеку країни

Ключові слова: спільнотна ідентичність; соціальна ідентичність; громадянська ідентичність; війна; міждержавне військово-політичне протистояння; взаємодія спільнотних ідентичностей