

The perception of the Romanian Minority in Ukraine on the Russian-Ukrainian War

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Abstract

This study sets out to examine the perception of Romanian minority groups and Romanian speakers in Ukraine on the Russian-Ukrainian war right after Moscow launched the large-scale invasion (24 February 2022). The paper studies the impact Ukraine's policies addressing national minorities and their poor reception have had on community-wide perception on the war. Equally contributing are the crimes committed by Soviet authorities against the Romanian minority, for which part of the blame is projected onto present-day Russia. Data collected as part of field research (focus groups interviews, surveys, analyses of Romanian-language publications) is evidence in favor of the Romanian minority's support for Ukraine and for its condemnation of Russia's military actions. In the full-blown Russian-Ukrainian war, the Romanian national minority proved its political loyalty towards Kyiv due to its civic identity (as citizens of Ukraine), without abandoning its ethnic legacy. At the same time, support for Ukraine's war efforts is interpreted as a compelling reason in the future for Ukrainian authorities to change the national minority laws. The war and expectations linked to its outcome are seen through an "ethnic lens", a community-specific perspective developed as a consequence of overlapping identities.

Keywords: *Ukraine, Russia, Romanian minority, war, ethnic identity.*

Introduction

In the 2014-2022 period, relations between Ukrainian authorities and national minorities have become a topic of disinformation in the hybrid Russian-Ukrainian war. On the one hand, Ukraine expressed its commitment to modernize the legislation in the field of national minorities so as to reflect European standards (Chervonenko, 2019). On the other hand, the Russian Federation repeatedly tried to use this topic in some of its campaigns designed to spread *fake news* (Gherman, 2022). Moscow sought to cause fractures at the level of Ukrainian society and use these divisions and the Soviet-era overlapping identities to serve its political agenda. Official narratives and media outlets in Russia paid special attention to the

Russian national minority, Russian speakers as well as other minority groups in Ukraine.

The juxtaposition of ethnic and civic identities was a major topic of cross-disciplinary research after the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the outbreak of the war in Donbas (Zhurzhenko, 2014). Whereas Russia tried to prove through the media outlets at its disposal and official communications that Ukraine is a divided state in terms of national identity, Kyiv was striving to build a Ukrainian political nation at odds with the Russian one.

In this respect, starting 2017, Ukraine passed a number of laws that consolidated the status of the Ukrainian language in the fields of education, economy, culture and media. Unfortunately, these political decisions sparked disgruntlement among national minorities in Ukraine, including the Romanian one. While the Romanian national minority described the laws as an “assimilation” attempt, Ukrainian authorities argued they are promoting an “integration policy” (Varha *et al.*, 2020). According to Ukraine’s official standpoint, every item of legislation passed since 2017 must be interpreted in the context of Russia’s attempts at destabilizing Ukrainian society by means of manipulating public opinion over the rights of the Russian-speaking population. At the same time, Ukrainian authorities claimed the de-Russification and decommunization of Ukrainian society were key political priorities (Polovynko & Shcheglova, 2016).

Describing itself as a “collateral victim” of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the Romanian national minority staged street protests against the legislative initiatives of Ukraine (Struț, 2017). Representatives of the Romanian minority submitted a number of official notifications to Ukrainian authorities, condemning Kyiv’s ethnic-linguistic policy and labeling it an “assimilation” campaign. Members of organizations representing the Romanian national minority expressed confusion regarding the authorities’ decision to revoke some of their historical rights. Their concerns were discussed in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and on the sidelines of other international meetings (Grejdeanu, 2017).

The status of the Romanian national minority started carrying more weight in Ukrainian-Romanian diplomatic ties. Although Ukrainian officials gave assurances they would comply with the recommendations of the European Commission for Democracy through Law of the Council of Europe (the Venice Commission) and that they would gradually implement whatever is stipulated under international law (Grămadă, 2020), the issue continued to weigh down on bilateral diplomatic ties and relations between Kyiv authorities and the Romanian national minority. Prior to 24 February 2022, no compromise solution had been identified that would reconcile Kyiv’s desire to consolidate the status of the

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Ukrainian language in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian hybrid war with the requests of the Romanian national minority of reverting to the previous legislation, which it considered to be more permissive.

At the same time, a number of painful memories linked to Soviet deportations, famine and repression remain deeply engrained in the collective mindset of the Romanian national minority in Ukraine, which associates these experiences with present-day Russia (Lavric, 2015). Romanian speakers in Ukraine claim Russia is the rightful heir to the USSR's political tradition, which is why part of the traumas they experienced in the past have been projected on the image of modern-day Russia.

Therefore, the perception of the Romanian minority on Ukraine is swayed by developments linked to the legislative initiatives of recent years. At the same time, the Romanian community's perception on Russia is closely tied to the history of trauma and abuse endured under the Soviet regime.

In that respect, the perspective on the Russian-Ukrainian war at the level of the Romanian national minority appears to be a unique social phenomenon in the broader post-communist context. This paper will examine this perspective starting from the outset of the war – Russia's launch of the large-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. The paper will employ sociological instruments (surveys, focus group interviews, press reviews). In terms of methodology, the study employs the "ethnic lens", an instrument used by researchers to study the social capital of ex-communist states in Central and Eastern Europe (Dowley & Silver, 2002).

The perception of the Romanian minority in Ukraine about the Russian-Ukrainian conflict will be tackled also based on the teachings of constructivist theories, which interpret linguistic and ethnic identity transformations in connection to the political context (Chandra & Boulet, 2012). This study will also outline the findings of field research conducted in the Ukrainian regions of Chernivtsi, Zakarpattia and Odesa.

Demographic and linguistic features of the Romanian national minority in Ukraine

The Romanian national minority in Ukraine is clustered in the Chernivtsi and Zakarpattia oblasts in western Ukraine as well as in the Odesa oblast, in the south. According to the latest census organized in 2001 in Ukraine (UKRCENSUS, 2003a), the Chernivtsi region is home to 698.1 thousand Ukrainian ethnics (75%), 114.6 thousand Romanian nationals (12.5%) and 67.2 thousand Moldovan ethnics (7.3%). The census also reveals that an insignificant

number of Romanians (under 0.2%) live in Odesa, although official data shows a large number of Moldovan citizens live here.

According to Ukrainian authorities, the Moldovan national minority differs from the Romanian one, although these two ethnic minorities are bound by the same language. Ukrainian legislation still uses the term “Moldovan” to refer to the national language of Moldova, although things might change after the Romanian language was declared the official language of the Republic of Moldova, replacing the Soviet-era Moldovan linguonym (RFE, 2023). In the context of Ukraine’s decommunization policy launched after the annexation of Crimea, Kyiv started to gradually discard a number of myths, historical interpretations and identities fashioned under the USSR (Hrytsenko, 2019). According to Ukrainian historian Oleksiy Mustafin (2023), the Moldovan language is identical to the Romanian one and is nothing but a fabrication of Soviet authorities. Ukrainian experts are analyzing Chişinău’s break with the Moldovan linguonym in the context of decommunization. Philologists (Cernov, 2020) as well as the Venice Commission (2017) have recommended Ukraine adopt the same approach to Romanian speakers in the three regions, irrespective of their publicly assumed identity as Romanian or Moldovan.

For these reasons, this study will work not just with the concept of Romanian national minority, but also with the idea of a Romanian linguistic minority, encompassing the Romanian-speaking population of Ukraine, regardless of whether they consider themselves Romanian or Moldovan ethnics. Based on the 2001 census (UKRCENSUS, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c), Ukraine is home to 409.6 thousand Romanian speakers, accounting for 0.8% of Ukraine’s total population. This number will be a point of reference when discussing the Romanian linguistic minorities of Chernivtsi, Zakarpattia and Odesa regions.

Perceptions on the war, identified based on focus group interviews

In October 2022, three focus group interviews were conducted in Chernivtsi (Chernivtsi region), Solotvyno (Zakarpattia region) and Izmail (Odesa region), with the participation of representatives of the cultural, political and confessional elites of the Romanian national minority in Ukraine. The interviews were broken down in three sections and consisted of both audio and video. Each focus group interview comprised 4 participants for each of the three regions, including teaching staff, journalists, clergymen, representatives of local authorities and volunteers. The list of interviewees included 7 women and 5 men aged 18-60.

In all of the three regions inhabited by Romanian ethnics or Romanian speakers, the Russian-Ukrainian war is seen as a Russian act of aggression against

Ukraine. 10 in 12 interviewees said they wanted Ukraine to defeat Russia because it is fighting a “fair” war to defend and liberate its territory.

Russia is accused of violating international law, destroying the peaceful life of Ukraine and displacing the local population in large numbers. Additionally, Russia’s military aggression is labeled as detrimental to the preservation of the ethnic and linguistic identity of Romanian national minorities: “Nearly 20% of Romanian pupils left Ukraine in the wake of Russia’s war” (Focus Group Interview, Chernivtsi, 6 October 2022).

Two thirds of interviewees see the possible defeat of Ukraine in the ongoing war as a genuine catastrophe for the Romanian national minority, as well as for neighboring states, including Romania. Ukraine’s cooperation with Western partners is described as “an axis of good”, targeted against “our enemy, Russia” (Focus Group Interview, Izmail, 7 October 2022). Ukraine’s victory in the war is not seen as a preference, but rather as the historical duty of every Ukrainian citizen, considering the suffering of the civilian population and the bravery of Ukrainian servicemen, regardless of their ethnic background: “We have already won. All we need now is time and patience” (Focus Group Interview, Solotyvno, 6 October 2022).

Table 1
The perception of Romanian minorities on the war in Ukraine

Region	Who is responsible for the outbreak of the war?	Who will win the war?	Pro-Russian attitudes in the region	How does the war affect the Romanian minority?	The main consequence of the war	Ukraine’s number one partner
Chernivtsi	Russia	Ukraine	absent	indirect	depopulation	Romania
Zakarpattia	Russia	Ukraine	absent	indirect	poverty	Romania
Odesa	Russia	Ukraine	partially present	direct	insecurity	Romania

Note. As per focus group interviews conducted in October 2022.

Whereas the inhabitants of Ukraine’s western regions believe the Romanian national minority is indirectly affected by the war, those in the southern region of Odesa claim Russia’s aggression has a direct impact on their livelihood (Table 1). More often than not, the inhabitants of Odesa invoked air strikes on civilian infrastructure, servicemen killed on the frontline and the widespread feeling of insecurity as some of the issues they have to deal with. Romanian ethnics who claimed the war does not affect them directly believe depopulation and poverty are the biggest problems caused by the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict. The farther members of the Romanian minority are from the frontline, the more their

concerns refer to a plethora of social and economic difficulties. The farther one goes from military hot zones, the more ethnic discourse and concerns prevail over security-related issues.

Only residents of the Odesa region admitted they have noticed pro-Russian attitudes in their region, leaving out Romanians from Chernivtsi and Zakarpattia. Concurrently, Romanian speakers in Odesa region underscored an increase in the level of popular support for the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the context of ongoing hostilities. The war prompted a great deal of Ukrainian citizens to show more loyalty to the Ukrainian state, irrespective of their ethnicity, focus group interviewees have argued. “At the start of the war, some had positive opinions about Russia. Whereas a few months ago 30% were pro-European and 70% pro-Russian, now the tables have turned in the region of Odesa.” (Focus Group Interview, Izmail, 7 October 2022)

Romanian ethnics and Romanian speakers in the three regions regard the Romanian state as a major supporter of Ukraine’s defensive efforts. In the context of Romania’s support to Kyiv, members of the Romanian national minority say Ukrainian authorities will be compelled to modify the legislation in the fields of education, media and culture as a whole in recognition of Romania’s contribution. “Once the war is over, Ukraine will have to modify the laws that discriminate against us, as a sign of gratitude towards Romania and the Romanian ethnics who risked their lives fighting this war.” (Focus Group Interview, Chernivtsi, 6 October 2022)

Irrespective of the region we’re referring to, representatives of the Romanian national minority displayed solidarity with Ukraine and supported this country’s war effort. Support for Ukraine appears to be unconditional, despite disgruntlement over Ukraine’s previous policies and legislative initiatives addressing ethnic and linguistic minorities. The question of preserving the national and linguistic identity of this minority was not abandoned, despite Russia’s military campaign on the territory of Ukraine. Interpreting political developments through an “ethnic lens”, focus group participants don’t want Ukraine to lose the war. However, when it emerges victorious, Kyiv must modify the legislation guaranteeing the rights of national minorities. Support offered to Ukraine in this war is seen as a social capital provided in advance, which Kyiv is expected to pay back through legislative initiatives in times of peace.

Romanians in Ukraine claim they are not psychologically affected by bombings, air raid sirens, the suspension of classes in schools or the impoverishment of the population. “We are living in uncertainty, that’s the biggest problem. We worry because we don’t know what tomorrow will bring for Ukraine

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and, last but not least, for us, Romanians in Ukraine.” (Focus Group Interview, Chernivtsi, 6 October 2022)

The perception of the Russian-Ukrainian war stemming from the focus group interviews conducted in the Ukrainian regions of Chernivtsi, Zakarpattia and Odesa, confirms the natural overlay of civic and ethnic identities. As Romanian ethnics, but also as citizens of Ukraine, the members of the Romanian national minority want Ukraine to prevail in the ongoing war, arguing that a defeat for Ukraine would also cause the conflict to spill to neighboring states. Russia is seen as a threat both to Ukraine as well as to the Romanian national minority. When the war is over, Kyiv’s attitude towards the Romanian community needs to change, and the legislation addressing them should become more permissive, focus group interviewees have argued.

Perceptions on the war, identified based on surveys

Over 15-25 October 2022, I have conducted a mixed sociological survey using quotas (50% by telephone and 50% online) on a sample population of 740 people, representative for a small fraction of the Romanian linguistic minority in Ukraine. The rounding used to establish the sample parameters, while factoring in population ageing in comparison to the findings of the 2001 census and the drop in birth rates over 2012-2021 (UN, 2021) has helped set the margin error at 4%.

Whereas focus group interviews targeted the cultural and administrative elite of the Romanian minority, the findings of the survey are representative of the entire Romanian linguistic minority in Ukraine. The surveys only factored in participants’ demographic profile in terms of age/gender (UKRCENSUS, 2003d).

According to the findings of the survey, 65% of Romanian-language speakers consider Russia to be solely responsible for the outbreak of the war. Only 1% of respondents said the same is true of Ukraine. 14% of respondents claimed both countries are to blame for the military escalation started on 24 February 2022. The other Romanian speakers blame global actors or identified themselves as supporters of conspiracy theories that justify the war (IPSSC, 2022). Whereas the intellectual elite was unequivocal about blaming Russia for the start of the war, the survey identified other points of view.

8 in 10 Romanian speakers in Ukraine claim they have relatives, friends or acquaintances who have been fighting on the frontline over 2014 – October 2022. 57% of respondents say they know people who were killed in the war, which is indicative of the direct involvement of Romanian ethnics or Romanian speakers in Russian-Ukrainian military clashes. Asked if they have “family, friends of acquaintances who fight (or have fought) on the frontline as part of the Ukrainian

Armed Forces”, inhabitants of Chernivtsi and Odesa provided 2.5 more positive replies compared to the inhabitants of Zakarpattia.

Whereas focus group interviews confirmed that the war-related problems affecting the Romanian national minority differed across regions, surveys revealed a more homogenous reality. 73% of respondents said the most serious consequence of the war is insecurity. Given the possibility to choose between several responses, Romanian speakers mentioned poverty and economic issues (50.1%), the interdiction to leave Ukraine applied to conscription-aged men (32.3%), rising social unrest, intolerance and hatred at society level (27%), young people and children leaving Ukrainian settlements (25.4%). The inhabitants of the three regions displayed a tolerant attitude towards people who were internally displaced by military events.

Much like in the case of focus group interviews, Romanians believe Ukraine will win the war (60%). Only 4.2% of respondents said Russia has bigger chances of winning the war. 2 in 10 Romanian speakers provided less categorical responses, saying that “a temporary peace will follow, at the end of which the war will start with renewed vigor”.

Asked to outline the biggest problems facing by the Romanian national minority in the last 30 years, respondents mentioned “access to education in the mother tongue” (64%) and “the disappearance of Romanian-language TV and radio programmes” (52%). In spite of the war, Romanian speakers believe identity issues – preserving the language, culture, education and the media – are the most important of the last three decades. Additionally, they underscored “Romania’s low interest for the state of the Romanian community” (43%). Both states are seen as equally responsible for the unresolved problems of this national minority.

Romanian television and radio stations have partially contributed to shaping perceptions on the war in Ukraine, as they are followed by half of respondents. It’s also worth mentioning that Romanian speakers obtain their information about military and political developments in Ukraine from several sources at the same time. Given the possibility to choose between several responses, 64.3% of respondents identified Ukrainian-language television and radio stations as their primary source of information, 50.5% mentioned Romanian television and radio stations, 49.2% identified social media as their source, including the webpages of certain newspapers or news agencies, 45% Telegram channels, while 30.5% Romanian-language media in the regions of Chernivtsi, Zakarpattia and Odesa. It’s also worth highlighting the growing popularity of online media, social networks and Telegram channels amidst the Romanian community in Ukraine. Moreover, to most Romanians in Ukraine, the main source of information is represented by

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Ukrainian-language TV and radio stations, in addition to media outlets in Romania.

Similar to the findings of focus group interviews, the survey also noted the disgruntlement of Romanian ethnics towards a number of Ukrainian policies in the last 30 years. Discontentment tied to the existence of legislative barriers hampering the preservation of ethnic and linguistic identity did not influence the Romanian minority's support for Ukraine in the context of the war. On the contrary, Romanian speakers feel hopeful about Ukraine's victory and expect a swift defeat of the Russian Federation.

Perceptions on the war, identified in the Romanian-language media

I have examined the main narratives promoted by Romanian-language media in Ukraine over 24 February – 24 October 2022. The research was conducted by applying a set of methods pertaining to political communication (Gosselin, 1995), as well as language analysis (Toolan, 2001), with a view to sorting through the narratives describing media perceptions on the war.

To that end, I monitored Romanian-language print (*Monitorul Bucovinean* - The Bukovina Monitor, *Gazeta de Herța* - The Herța Gazette) and online (*Zorile Bucovinei* - Dawns of Bukovina, *Libertatea Cuvântului* - Freedom of Speech, *Agenția BucPress* - BucPress Agency) media. All these publications are headquartered in Chernivtsi, while Romanian language periodicals are absent in the other regions.

Following the start of the large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, Romanian-language media criticized the war and the Russian Federation's aggression in strong terms. For instance, in an article published by *Zorile Bucovinei*, Romanian journalists referred to Russia's attack on Ukraine as "a monstrous aggression against a peaceful nation" (ZB, 2022).

Romanian journalists in Ukraine have condemned the actions of the Russian Federation, expressing solidarity with Ukraine despite past grievances regarding Kyiv's policies addressing national minorities. In recent months, dozens of official press releases and statements of government and non-government organizations in both Ukraine and Romania have been publicized. *Libertatea Cuvântului* wrote about the solidarity expressed by the Council of the Union of Ukrainians in Romania, which firmly condemned the Russian Federation's armed aggression against Ukraine. The publication reported on the blatant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, of international law, of regional, European and Euro-Atlantic security and stability (LC, 2022).

Romanian-language media outlets in Ukraine regularly quoted official press releases issued by the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, Regional State Administrations or Enrollment and Social Welfare Centers. All publications delivered periodic updates about losses sustained by Ukraine and Russia on the battlefield. The topic reflected Kyiv's official standpoint. Romanian journalists in Chernivtsi reported on both Ukrainian and Romanian nationals who were killed in battle fighting for Ukraine.

Agenția BucPress and *Gazeta de Herța* published a series of articles in memory of the Romanian ethnics who went to war to defend Ukraine against the Russian Federation's acts of aggression. The Romanian-language publications drew attention to the decision of certain representatives of the Romanian language minority who returned home in order to enroll. "Victory will definitely belong to Ukraine, but for the time being the soul of our brave hero will make its way to the spiritual world", *Agenția BucPress* writes (Bulagarak, 2022). The participation of Romanian ethnics in the efforts to defend the Ukrainian state was represented in the articles carried by Romanian media as an act of heroism, a practice encouraged by all other publications.

Russia's official narratives were not just kept out of print, but also invalidated or criticized. In this respect, the Romanian-language media displayed solidarity with Kyiv's defensive war efforts. Romanian-language publications scrutinized a series of events, such as the attacks on critical infrastructure, the killing of civilians and the atrocities committed by the Russian army in various settlements across Ukraine (Namaca, 2022, p. 1). No pro-Russian or anti-Ukrainian views were published on the pages of Romanian-language publications or on their social media profiles.

The Romanian-language media also reported on the support provided by Romania and Romanian ethnics in Ukraine to the Ukrainian Armed Forces and to the internally displaced population. *Gazeta de Herța* analyzed the contribution of leaders of Ukrainian settlements inhabited by Romanians to managing the flow of humanitarian aid delivered by the West. In the first months of the war, the Romanian national minority became a bridge between Ukrainian society and Western partners who sought to help the Ukrainian state (Platonov, 2022).

The Romanian-language media in Ukraine hailed the support provided by Romania and Romanian citizens, evidence of which were the words of gratitude published on the websites of these publications and conveyed to Bucharest for its support. "Romanians have always been good, merciful and helpful in times of need – they would share their last crust to help their neighbors in times of hardship. A friend in need is a friend indeed, one who helps Ukraine", *Zorile*

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Bucovinei writes (Nichita-Toma, 2022a). Romanian-born journalists also underscored the creation and activity of humanitarian hubs and refugee centers, the collaboration between Ukrainian and Romanian volunteers, as well as blood donation campaigns. At the same time, media outlets also reported on the political support offered by the Romanian government, as well as the gratitude expressed by Ukrainian authorities for all the assistance received.

Arguing strongly in favor of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, Romanian journalists did not abandon topics of interest to the Romanian minority. In spite of the war, the Romanian-language media continued to express concern over the possible loss of linguistic and ethnic identity. Media outlets continue to tackle such topics as the shortcomings of Romanian-language teaching, the preservation of national identity, the shutdown of Romanian-language publications or the disappearance of Romanian-language TV and radio programmes. In the context of Romania's support for Ukraine, Romanian-speaking journalists' expectations from Kyiv authorities went up. "Why should Romanians abandon their language, their history, their ancestors, only to die for Ukraine? And all this time, Romania remains one of Ukraine's staunchest supporters", *Zorile Bucovinei* writes (Nichita-Toma, 2022b).

Concurrently, *Monitorul Bucovinean* points out that Romania's support for Ukraine should serve as an incentive for Ukrainian decision-makers to change legislation in the field of national minority rights (Șapcă, 2022). Referring to the support offered to Ukraine and the Ukrainian army as a gesture of unconditional help, the Romanian-language media did not discard topics of usual interest to Romanian speakers. The tone of discontentment permeating some of the media articles with respect to the state of the Romanian minority in Ukraine did not generate anti-Ukrainian attitudes. The two issues – the rights of national minorities and the war in Ukraine – were tackled separately and very rarely intertwined. Most publications and news agencies voiced very high expectations from Ukrainian lawmakers once hostilities have ended.

Conclusions

The perception of the Romanian national minority on the war in Ukraine is dominated by Kyiv's public policies in recent years, as well as by recent trauma generated by the crimes of the Soviet regime. Data collected in the wake of field research has confirmed community-wide support for Ukraine from the Romanian national minority and strong criticism of Russia's military actions. With the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in full swing, the Romanian minority displayed political loyalty towards Kyiv due to its Ukrainian political identity, built over the

last 30 years, without however relinquishing its ethnic identity. At the same time, support for Ukraine in the context of the war is interpreted as a compelling reason for Ukrainian authorities to improve legislation on national minorities in the future.

According to focus group interviews, conducted in the regions of Chernivtsi, Zakarpattia and Odesa, Ukraine's defeat in the ongoing war could spell a genuine catastrophe. Russia is regarded as an existential threat. The farther representatives of the Romanian national minority are from military hot zones, the more Romanian ethnic discourse prevails over Ukrainian political rhetoric.

The survey conducted amidst Romanian speakers, regardless of their ethnic (Romanian or Moldovan) makeup, proves their unconditional support for Ukraine's war efforts. Russia is seen as the aggressor. War-generated instability induces a sense of frustration caused by insecurity in Romanian communities. At the same time, this linguistic minority preserves its current demands with respect to Ukrainian legislation, which it regards as restrictive towards Romanian-language education and media.

An analysis of Romanian-language media in Chernivtsi revealed a maximum degree of solidarity with Ukraine. Media narratives about the war are basically identical with the official discourse of Ukrainian authorities. No pro-Russian attitudes were detected on the webpages of Romanian-language publications. Similar to the findings of focus group interviews and surveys, the Romanian media voiced very high expectations from Ukraine at the end of the war.

Perception on the war and expectations with respect to its outcome are seen through "the ethnic lens" emerged as a consequence of overlapping identities. Loyalty and support for Ukraine are perceived by Romanian national minority groups as a form of social capital provided in advance to Ukrainian authorities in exchange for their efforts to change the legislation at the end of the war. The overlapping ethnic and civic identities generate specific expectations at the level of the Romanian national minority. Field data shows this minority will feel more threatened should Ukraine lose the war. At the same time, fear of ethnic assimilation is just as high a threat as the possibility of Russia emerging victorious in its war on Ukraine.

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