



Resilience of Ukrainian Society in Resistance to the Russian Genocide

Boltivets S^{1*} and Stepyko M²

¹State Institute of Family and Youth Policy, Ukraine

²National Institute for Strategic Studies, Ukraine

***Corresponding author:** Sergii Ivanovich Boltivets, State Institute of Family and Youth Policy, Ukraine, Tel: +380 68 350 49 86; Email: boltivetssergij@i.ua

Mini Review

Volume 8 Issue 2

Received Date: June 14, 2024

Published Date: July 15, 2024

DOI: 10.23880/mhrij-16000250

Abstract

The article highlights the foundations of the resilience of the largest communities in the modern world, which identify themselves as nations, using the example of the resilience of Ukrainian society in resisting the Russian genocide. It was noted that national identity is the main attributive, socio-cultural and civilizational characteristic of the nation, the civilizational brand of the country and the state, an important factor in their legitimation on the world stage, the key basis of either the separation or consolidation of society. The destruction of this identity is aimed at any war, which belongs to the events of the highest level of danger for all components of both personal and collective identity. Among the variants of the destructive impact of war on identity, the article highlights: comprehensively traumatic, which has totally negative consequences for identity; partially traumatic, affecting either personal or social components; and adaptive, when a person is able to cope with the consequences of such an influence. It has been found that a war that threatens the independence and sovereignty of a country can, under certain conditions, increase the resilience of a society and the hope of a population at risk, despite a reduced sense of well-being and a higher level of suffering. The consolidation potential and stability of the Ukrainian national identity was embodied in the overcoming of the value anemia of civil society during the war. Resilience was embodied in the heyday of volunteering in Ukraine, which coincided with the Revolution of Dignity and the beginning of the war in Donbas in 2014. In an extremely difficult period, it was this movement that united society, created an effective structure of public organizations, which took upon themselves the solution of the most urgent and painful problems of the state. The joint resilience of the people in the conditions of war was embodied in activities aimed at preventing social tension by supporting internally displaced persons and the most disadvantaged categories of the population; ensuring a dignified existence of citizens who, due to objective circumstances, are unable to take care of themselves on their own; overcoming the shortcomings of the state social policy, primarily due to prompt response and provision of effective targeted social assistance that meets the needs and requests of a specific person; spread of humanistic and altruistic ideas and attitudes in society. Full-scale Russian aggression also significantly changed the factors of self-identification of citizens: if earlier the vast majority of respondents indicated the priority of family inheritance, then the consequence of the war was the preference over the inheritance of civil union. An indicator of the vitality of the Ukrainian nation is the readiness of citizens with weapons in their hands to defend the independence and territorial integrity of the country. For the resilience of a person in the conditions of war, it is important to identify oneself with a community capable of survival and life, which includes all the people and peoples of the world who help to preserve the life of the Ukrainian people and Ukrainians in the conditions of the Russian war.

Keywords: Resilience of Communities; Russian Genocide; Destructive Impact of War; Societal Resilience; Full-Scale Russian Aggression; Self-Identification of Citizens; Civil Unity



Identifying Resilience in Times of War

The resilience of society during a war aimed at the destruction of the human community is fundamentally based on national identification-properties that unite everyone and unconditionally define mutual understanding and mutual support. National identity is the main attributive, socio-cultural and civilizational characteristic of the nation, the civilizational brand of the country and the state, an important factor in their legitimation on the world stage, the key basis of either disunity or consolidation of society. That is why the main goal of the war of the Russian war against Ukraine was declared to be the «denazification» of Ukrainians, and therefore the genocide of the Ukrainian nation as a strategic military goal of the Russian Federation. War is one of the events of the highest level of danger for all components of both personal and collective identity. Among the variants of the destructive impact of war on identity, the following can be distinguished: comprehensively traumatic, which has totally negative consequences for identity; partially traumatic, affecting either personal or social components; and adaptive, when a person is able to cope with the consequences of such an influence.

The resilience and vulnerability of Ukrainians and the role of the family during the war is considered in the study by A. Kostenko V, et al. [1] in the context of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, which led to numerous physical and moral trials. Thus, an online survey using Google Forms and online focus group interviews were conducted in September-November 2022. Surveyed members of households (1,089 respondents) of Kyiv, Lviv, Zakarpattia, Mykolaiv, Sumy, Chernihiv and Dnipropetrovsk territorial communities assessed the social stability of the family, which is based on indicators of the availability of means of livelihood, well-being, security, available social services, public participation and management, which express the ability of affected families to recover from wartime problems. Respondents mostly positively assessed Ukraine's prospects: 59% believe that the situation in the country will most likely improve. During the escalation of the war, 67.2% of respondents expected family support and 48.8% helped their relatives, but relying on family support did not increase their expectations for security. In communities that did not increase their level of activism in response to the war by one percentage point, the "feeling insecure" response increased by 1.8 percentage points, implying that active citizenship is also responsible for feelings of security (other things being equal) and increasing the vitality of society. At the same time, even in wartime, the indicators of social atomization are quite high, because 46.2% relied only on themselves and solved their problems independently, without anyone's help. According to the authors' conclusion, the development of family relations is one of the effective mechanisms for attracting internal

human resources to solve wartime tasks.

Kudlenko A [2] notes that since the full-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Ukrainian society, contrary to expectations, has demonstrated courage, unity, strength and resilience. Ukraine's resilience, although hidden by narratives about it being divided, weak and stuck in Russia's sphere of influence, surprised observers. The resilience of Ukrainians as an internal process that was not the result of externally funded projects arose through a network of indigenous relationships, permeating the past, present and future. The value of freedom, the traditions of self-organization and the desire to join the Euro-Atlantic community are defined by the author as sources of Ukrainian stability. Oksamytna K [3] rightly draws attention to the fact that the brutality of the Russian invasion was intensified by the awareness of the Russian troops that the Ukrainians not only rejected their «rescue mission», but also did not need it.

Comparative Parallels

A study by Kimhi S, et al. [4] revealed the following three notable results:

The Ukrainian sample reported significantly higher levels of the following symptoms: distress, feeling unsafe, and perceived threats compared to the Israeli sample. However, despite these harsh feelings, Ukrainian respondents reported significantly higher levels of hope and social resilience compared to their Israeli counterparts, as well as slightly higher individual and societal resilience.

- a. Protective factors of respondents in Ukraine (level of hope, well-being, and morale) included three types of resilience (individual, community, and social) that were dominated by vulnerability factors (perception of danger, symptoms of distress, and level of threats).
- b. Hope and well-being were the best predictors of the three types of resilience.
- c. Demographic characteristics of Ukrainian respondents almost did not contribute to the prediction of the three types of resilience. It turns out that a war that threatens the independence and sovereignty of a country can, under certain conditions, increase the resilience of society and the hope of the population under threat, despite a reduced sense of well-being and a higher level of suffering, a sense of danger and perception of its reality [4].

The results of a mixed survey of 79 respondents conducted by Hanson-DeFusco J [5] in the spring of 2022 showed that Ukrainian resistance fighters face extreme physical threats, are displaced, separated from their families, and experience high levels of stress, especially anxiety, sadness, and anger. However, people tend to experience significantly fewer general symptoms of the Perceived

Symptom Scale when they have intrinsic motivations related to patriotic ideology, altruism, and genocide prevention. Bootstrap regression modeling shows that family ties to one's nation reduce symptoms by approximately 13%. In comparison, long separation from family is associated with 21% higher stress. These motivations seem to provide a sense of purpose and a source of resilience despite the health risks associated with resisting full-scale foreign invasion [5].

The war destroyed the dominant negativism of the perception of the state, showing Ukrainians that, having lost their state, they would lose much of what they were used to and what they valued. The correlation of the opposition «trust-distrust» in the conditions of war has a clear psychological and identification dimension. Distrust in government institutions and civil society, disappointment in political leaders, parties, movements, along with self-doubt, lack of internal support, value disorientation have the most traumatic impact, because neither personal nor collective identity has the resources to successfully adapt to the consequences of war. In such situations, a person experiencing the tragedy of war needs external support and qualified psychological help. Therefore, the consolidation potential and stability of the Ukrainian national identity are also determined by overcoming the value anemia of civil society in the conditions of war. Generally accepted norms and values of identity have become more defined and legitimate, therefore anomie moods have ceased to dominate in society: the number of those who are dominated by anomie state (state of demoralization) has decreased from 72 to 48% of respondents [6].

Civic Action Saves Lives

Civil society was also able to quickly respond to the challenges caused by the war. Civil society organizations were able to cover a large number of urgent needs, and in particular, those that the state could not provide on its own. This became possible also because only in 2022, 68% of Ukrainians were involved in volunteer activities, and 77% trusted volunteer organizations [7].

Resilience was embodied in the flowering of volunteer activity in Ukraine, which coincided with the Revolution of Dignity and the beginning of the war in Donbas - 2014. In an extremely difficult period, it was this movement that united society, created an effective structure of public organizations, which took upon themselves the solution of the most urgent and painful problems of the state. It is the volunteers who have become the driving force that helps the army today in the conditions of martial law, when the state is unable to provide the security and defense sector properly.

The joint resilience of the people in the conditions of war was embodied in activities aimed at preventing social tension by supporting internally displaced persons and the most disadvantaged categories of the population; ensuring a dignified existence of citizens who, due to objective circumstances, are unable to take care of themselves on their own; overcoming the shortcomings of the state social policy, primarily due to prompt response and provision of effective targeted social assistance that meets the needs and requests of a specific person; spread of humanistic and altruistic ideas and attitudes in society. This time became an important factor in the new level of legitimization of the peculiarities of the functioning and vital activities of civil society, its institutions and structures, recognition by citizens and the state of its importance and significance.

Another dimension of the stability of Ukrainian identity was the national self-determination of the residents of Ukraine. Answering the question «How proud are you that you are a citizen of Ukraine?», in May 2023 94% of respondents answered that they are «very proud» or «rather proud» of their Ukrainian citizenship. In 2015, there were 68% of them, in 2010-62%, in 2000 - 62%. A particularly noticeable increase in the share of those who are «very proud» of Ukrainian citizenship-from 23% in 2000 to 71% in 2023 [8].

Self-Identification Strengthens Mutual Support

The external boundaries of Ukrainian identity have become much clearer. European identity increased from 3.6 to 6.4 points (0 means that a person does not feel European at all, and 10 means that he feels absolutely). On the other hand, self-identification with «Soviet people» weakened - from 2.9 to 1.1 on a similar scale. And only 11% regret the collapse of the USSR, although a year before the war there were 32% of them (and this percentage has been more or less stable since 2014). And if in 2021 only 55% of respondents believed that Ukrainians and Russians are not the same people, then in March 2022 there were 77%, and in April - 91% [8].

Full-scale Russian aggression also significantly changed the factors of self-identification of citizens: if earlier the vast majority of respondents indicated the priority of family inheritance, then the consequence of the war was the preference over the inheritance of civil union. If in 2017, 68% of respondents stated that they simply inherited their nationality from their parents or one of their parents, then in 2022, only 48% of respondents thought so. That is, people increasingly call themselves Ukrainian precisely because they live in Ukraine, regardless of origin, and transfer this civic self-identification to the category of identity, which was traditionally ethnic [9].

This means that today identity is no longer a purely ethnic category, and its distribution does not reflect the ethnic map of Ukraine. It can be assumed that Ukraine has ceased to be a multi-ethnic country, because non-titular ethnic groups make up only a few percent of its population. Accordingly, ethnopolitics will not play a significant role in the national socio-political process, although it will remain an important factor in certain regions and in Ukraine's relations with international organizations that take care of the rights of national minorities (communities).

In the conditions of war, the very existential meaning of the concept of identity is clearly expressed. Her extreme experience turns out to be quite sufficient for erasing old ones and forming new identities. As a result, along with the identity of self-sacrifice in the name of protecting one's Motherland, there are individuals who are indifferent to their own self-determination, conscious collaborators, supporters of the «Russian measure» zombified by Russian propaganda, traitors, etc. Most people with a split or blurred consciousness are among pro-Russian people, of whom about 15-20% in Ukraine.

Separation from foreign, and now enemy, identities became an important factor in the viability of the nation. The rather strong stereotypes of a large part of Ukrainian society regarding kinship with Russians and Belarusians, Russia and Belarus underwent a significant transformation. It was these stereotypes that made it impossible to single out and emphasize a clear pro-European, Ukrainian collective identity and its difference from the pro-Russian imperial one. Currently, the vast majority of Ukrainian citizens (80%) would not allow Russians into the country even as tourists.

An important factor in national sustainability was the predominance of national unity over local identity: self-identification of a person with the community of a village, city, district, or region. Already on the eve of the large-scale Russian military invasion of Ukraine, national identity was significantly ahead of other alternatives. And already in 2022, it became absolutely dominant, remaining at the level of about 80% in 2023.

The consequence of such a choice was an increase in the cohesion, stability, effectiveness, and therefore the subjectivity and success of the Ukrainian civil society. On the contrary, when regional, ethnic, and religious identities, loyalties, and solidarities are more significant, prioritized, and legitimate than civic national identity, society becomes socially polarized, fragmented, and demarcated. Under the conditions of a war with an external enemy, the priority of local identity weakens the state and can be the cause of defeat in the war and the collapse of the state. Examples are the collapse of the Russian, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and

German empires as a result of their participation in the First World War.

Geopolitical and Emotional Priorities of Resilience

Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine significantly transformed the geopolitical priority of local identity. An indicator of the vitality of the Ukrainian nation is the readiness of citizens with weapons in their hands to defend the independence and territorial integrity of the country. The share of those who answered that they are ready to defend the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine with weapons in their hands was 29% in 2023 (among men-44%, among women-16%). In 2015, 17.5% of all respondents gave this answer [8].

An important factor in the vitality of the Ukrainian nation is the psycho-emotional endurance of the citizens of Ukraine. Before the war, in August 2021, no single system-forming psychological marker was found in the interviewees, no emotion was emphasized by the majority of the interviewees. However, a year later, the picture becomes different and reflects the changes that took place after the start of the war. A clear system-forming feeling appears - pride for Ukraine, which was noted by 75% of respondents, while its antithesis - shame, almost disappears from the palette of feelings (it was chosen by only 2%). The feeling of indifference also disappears. The balance of positive and negative (without anger) emotions changes radically and amounts to 58% versus 42% [10].

Paradoxically, large-scale Russian aggression led to a significant increase in social optimism about the future of the Ukrainian nation and the Ukrainian state. The consequence of the consolidation of society and national elevation during the war was the improvement of citizens' assessments of the economic situation in the country. They improved after the start of the large-scale invasion and remained the same for the second consecutive year, despite the significant losses suffered by industry and the labor market. According to sociologists, this phenomenon is closely related to the attitude towards the state: if a person has positive attitudes towards his own state, he is more likely to evaluate its economy better. A second possible explanation is a change in the evaluation context: during war, the demands on the economy differ from those in a more stable situation.

The results of the survey regarding the feeling of happiness before and during the war are somewhat paradoxical. According to this survey, on the eve of the Russian invasion in December 2021, 71% of Ukrainians considered themselves happy, and 15%, on the contrary, did not consider themselves so. However, more than a year of

war practically did not affect this picture. In May 2023, the ratio of happy to unhappy was 70% against 16%. Among the possible explanations is a significant reduction in the level of personal harassment during the war, which in some way compensates for the hardships people experience. In addition to negative factors, such as the deterioration of material living conditions, separation from their families, there are also positive factors - the growth of social cohesion, mutual support, improvement of the socio-psychological climate, etc. [11].

Conclusion

War, which consists in the mass killing of people, leads to the straining of the mechanisms of self-preservation of people united by their national vocation, which encourages mutual help and mutual support. Russia, which declared the goal of the war to be the destruction of the Ukrainian nation as a whole and is carrying out its intention by military means, strengthened the natural desire of man to preserve his own life, to resist his murderers by all possible means, the main of which is participation in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and all kinds of support for them together with countries - members of the European Union, USA, Canada, Great Britain, Australia and other democratic states of the world. For the resilience of a person in the conditions of war, it is important to identify oneself with a community capable of survival and life, which includes all the people and peoples of the world who help to preserve the life of the Ukrainian people and Ukrainians in the conditions of the Russian war.

References

4. Kostenko A, Semenov V, Osetrova O, Kubatko O, Nazarov M, et al. (2024) Resilience and vulnerability of Ukrainians: The role of family during the war. *Problems and Perspectives in Management* 22(1): 432-445.
5. Kudlenko A (2023) Roots of Ukrainian resilience and the agency of Ukrainian society before and after Russia's full-scale invasion. *Contemporary Security Policy* 44(4): 513-529.
6. Oksamytna K (2023) Imperialism, supremacy, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. *Contemporary Security Policy* 44(4): 497-512.
7. Kimhi S, Eshel Y, Marciano H, Adini B (2023) Impact of the war in Ukraine on resilience, protective, and vulnerability factors. *Front Public Health* 11: 1053940.
8. DeFusco JH (2022) Hardships, motivations, and resiliency: Case study of health implications of 2022 Russian invasion on Ukrainian resistance members. *Journal of Social, Behavioral, and Health Sciences* 16(1): 331-351.
9. Comprehensive Study: How the War Changed Me and the Country.
10. Organizations of civil society in conditions of war.
11. (2023) The effectiveness of the implementation of state policy in the sphere of the establishment of Ukrainian national and civil identity: sociological indicators.
12. Kulyk V (2024) Language and identity in Ukraine at the end of 2022. ZBRUC.
13. Psycho-emotional state of the population against the background of war: from mobilization of resources to polarization of assessments: Ukrainian society in the conditions of war. Year 2023: Collective monograph/ Dembitskyi S, Zlobina O, Kostenko N (Eds.), under the editorship member.-cor. NAS of Ukraine, Doctor of Philosophy. Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2023. Kyiv, Ukraine, pp: 186-187.
14. Self-assessment of happiness by the population of Ukraine before and after the large-scale Russian invasion. Press release. Kyiv International Institute Of Sociology.