

The Reasons for the Ukrainian Resistance to the Russian Invasion: Volunteers as Important Drivers of Civil Society in Ukraine

Yaroslav Pylynskyi

Russia's war against Ukraine is in full swing and is likely, in one form or another, covert or overt, to continue for a long time. In fact, for Ukrainians, the war has been going on for more than three centuries in latent form, ever since the Muscovites claimed suzerainty over Ukraine in the middle of the 17th Century, later occupied the country, and then called the occupation a reunification.¹ This war was especially cruel in the 20th Century because it was accompanied by the mass extermination of the Ukrainian people.

This extermination started with the war for Independence (1918–1921), then lasted through the Great Famine (*Holodomor*) used on the population of Ukraine by the Communist regime in 1921, 1932–1933, and 1947, and mass gulags² repressions from the 1930s through 1950s.³ However, despite such significant losses, the people's resistance to this enormous and multidimensional pressure continues into the 21st Century. And this is why the question arises among Ukrainians and their sympathizers and allies: What is the reason for such durability? Why couldn't stubborn campaigns of assimilation, repression, or even mass extermination overcome the resistance of the Ukrainian people, their desire for freedom, and their desire to live as they choose? Why have none of these severe ordeals—including repression and

¹ Richard Pipes, *Property and Freedom*. (New York: Vintage, 2000), 352; see also Serhii Plokhii, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 432.

² The term *GULAG* is derived from an abbreviation of the Russian words for “Main Directory of Camps.”

³ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).

famine—managed to overcome the aspirations of every single citizen of Ukraine to be free, to choose their own way of life, and to create their own destiny?

After the start of the war in 2014, which escalated to the level of a full-scale invasion beginning on February 24, 2022, new questions arise:

- Why does the population of Ukraine mainly consist of free citizens and not submissive actors carrying out the will imposed by their oppressors?
- Why do these citizens, so diverse, wayward, stubborn, imprudent, with different preferences, views and interests, prove to be able to unite, sacrifice their time, property, and now even their lives for the sake of a common goal—individual freedom—and the right to independently decide one's own destiny and that of one's country?
- How did it happen that, contrary to the assessments and predictions of numerous experts, the citizens turned out to be so strong, united, mobile, and capable of long-lasting resistance?
- How have they managed to organize such an effective resistance to the invaders?

After all, because of this unanimous resilience of Ukrainian citizens the free nations have believed in our victory, and began to help Ukrainians who proved that they yearn for freedom and are ready to fight for it.

This “Ukrainian phenomenon” has become today, probably without much exaggeration, the most significant discovery of the beginning of the 21st Century: revealing to the world a nation and a state whose existence was known only to its closest neighbors. Therefore, today, the interest in Ukraine of both academics and politicians should be focused not only on the ability of its citizens to resist and defeat a formidable and ruthless enemy, but also on the

reasons why Ukrainian citizens and their ideals and virtues have become the firm foundation for the indomitable resistance to such an insidious and strong enemy.

The formation of Ukrainian civil society, historical roots, and current state

Democratic values and aspirations for individual freedom have long been rooted in the consciousness of the Ukrainian nation. And, although they helped Ukrainians to maintain their own national identity for centuries, until now their existence was practically unknown even to their close neighbors. The fact is that during Ukraine's time as part of the Russian Empire, the Ukrainian way of life, history, literature, and culture were generally not known among other European nations. Therefore, actually, they did not exist in the international intellectual field. So, even if facts related to Ukrainian culture or history were mentioned publicly by anyone, it was only in the context of Russian history and culture and predominantly by using narratives formulated by the imperial center.

Especially because of this, it would be a surprise to many in the world today to learn that, for example, since the 16th Century, most Ukrainian settlements were self-governing. The townspeople elected their government according to the so-called Magdeburg Law statutes, which were widespread in Eastern Europe.⁴ Ukrainian peasants elected the village leaders. The urban population, in most cities, was multi-ethnic and multi-religious. That is why Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches, as well as Jewish synagogues still stand next to each other in the central streets of many historic city centers. Of

⁴ Jean Sedler, *East Central Europe in the Middle Ages, 1000–1500* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 569.

course, during their long coexistence, there have been conflicts between believers of different denominations.⁵ However, the presence of houses of worship belonging to different religions, coexisting on the same streets and dating back to medieval times, testifies to the high degree of religious tolerance in Ukraine then and now. Even today, aside from a few professional historians, only a few people know that in the 17th and 18th Centuries the territory of modern Ukraine was united by two Cossack states: the Hetmanate and the Zaporizhian Host. In both, citizens elected their leaders through democratic procedures. In the first state, the hetman (president) was elected at a meeting of the heads of territories called regiments; it was a kind of oligarchic democracy because colonels (heads of regiments and simultaneously of territories) were also elected at assemblies of Cossacks and citizens. The head (hetman) of the latter state was also elected by a general meeting of all adult male Cossacks (citizens). Therefore, it was essentially a direct military democracy.⁶

Because the memory of these practices of self-governance has not vanished from the minds of most Ukrainians, the elections of the president, members of parliament, and territorial leaders of various levels remain today the only acceptable way for Ukrainians to oversee a transfer of power. Therefore, any attempt to violate this custom is exposed to general opposition by the citizens, regardless of their partisan political preferences.

At the same time, during the last 300 years, Ukraine has been a part of the Russian Empire and, for most of the last 100 years, in the dark shadow of the Communist one. Therefore, it is no surprise that, although modern Ukrainians consider themselves a nation whose history goes back to at least

⁵ Serhii Plokhii, *Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 416.

⁶ Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 666.

the Middle Ages, most of the world learned about their existence mainly after the Orange Revolution of 2004. It was then that several months of peaceful protest against the falsification of the presidential election results, which took place in the center of Kyiv and other larger cities of Ukraine, were widely covered by various media outlets and, above all, broadcast on television screens around the globe. It was then that many people in the world began to distinguish Ukraine from the rest of the countries of the post-Soviet space, to imagine its position on the world map somewhere in the east of Europe.

The gas war, which was unleashed almost immediately by the Russian Federation against the democratically-elected Ukrainian government following the end of the Orange Revolution, also significantly increased Ukraine's visibility, especially among Europeans who feared they might be left without heating in the cold winter months of 2005 and 2006. Today, in 2022, Europeans have already become victims of this familiar gas blackmail coming from the Russian side. This is a logical consequence of the easygoing and imprudent refusal made by European governments to diversify their gas and oil supplies away from those of the Russian Federation, which continued even in the face of Russia's having seized Crimea in 2014 and the invasion in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that only a few politicians and scientists, mainly from the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, closely followed the events in Ukraine. In the meantime, most politicians, experts, journalists, and scientists from other countries working in the social sciences continued to use information from mainly Russian sources or relied on stories created by former specialists in Soviet studies. Many of them continued to convince their audiences that there was no separate Ukraine, there is not, and

there will be no one, sincerely portraying Ukraine as the territory of Moscow's quite legitimate cultural, political, and economic domination.⁷

Perhaps this alternate reality constantly formed by Muscovites prevented Western experts (that is, those who shape the political views of the leaders of states and public opinion in their countries), from seeing something fundamentally different between Ukraine and Russia. Alas, it is not challenging to create a distinct opinion as to why the idea of “the nonexistence of Ukraine and Ukrainians,” without exaggeration, was consistently imposed on the world by almost all Russian intellectuals, with only rare exceptions, regardless of their political views. Even when they were in exile or in the opposition to the political regime in Moscow, their situation did not significantly affect their superior attitude towards Ukraine and Ukrainians. And the fact that for centuries within Ukraine its writers, artists, and scientists created a Ukrainian culture distinct from that of Russia, few people took interest in it because it was allowed outside its ethnic borders almost exclusively in the form of mere ethnographic studies, carefully censored by the Russian authorities. However, this desire of the Russians to convince themselves and the rest of the world that there are no Ukrainians and that their language does not exist apart from being a dialect of Russian raises a natural question: Why do they constantly deny and forbid something that they believe does not exist? Why, during the last 400 years of coexistence, first in different states and then in one state, did the Moscow governments constantly forbid the Ukrainian language, including books, performances, and schooling in it, issuing 56 government acts, decrees, or resolutions for this purpose? How could something that does not exist and,

⁷ See the Valujevsky Decree of 1863, which prohibited any public use of the Ukrainian language (October 21, 2022), [http://www.hai-nyzhnyk.in.ua/doc2/1863\(06\)30.Valuev.cirkulyar.php](http://www.hai-nyzhnyk.in.ua/doc2/1863(06)30.Valuev.cirkulyar.php).

therefore, should not threaten the empire's existence, be banned so many times?⁸

In the 20th Century, the by then Communist Russian authorities found such prohibitions insufficient and Ukrainian intellectuals, the actual cultivators and fruits of precisely this culture of freedom, were subjected to repeated destruction *en masse*. The extermination of leading independent-minded people—writers, poets, scholars, and teachers—should be especially noted. For example, out of 193 writers belonging to the Union of Proletarian Writers of Ukraine in 1934, 97 were shot or imprisoned. During the following wave of repressions in 1937–1938, 130 Ukrainian writers were shot, 11 committed suicide, and another 119 were sent to the gulag camps.⁹ At the same time, 80% of teachers educated before the Bolshevik Revolution in October of 1917 were slandered, imprisoned, and sent into exile. Repression and imprisonments on a similar scale were also applied to the fields of science, culture, and the arts in Ukraine.¹⁰

Repression against Ukrainians' freedom-loving identity renewed after the short period of the so-called "thaw" of the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, another intensified assimilation process began. It consisted of the gradual closing of Ukrainian schools, primarily in cities; the displacement of the Ukrainian language from the spheres of art, higher education, science, and administration; and finally in the imprisonment and physical extermination of

⁸ Britt Peterson, "The Long War over the Ukrainian Language," *Boston Globe*, March 16, 2014, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2014/03/15/the-long-war-over-ukrainian-language/HXILbK9wVnhwGShNVPKIUP/story.html>.

⁹ Vasyly Marochko and Götz Hillig, *Represovani pedarori Ukraini: zhertvi politichnoro teroru, 1929–1941*, Institut Istorii Ukraini NAN Ukraini, Marburz'kiy Universitet (Nimechchina) (Kyiv: Naukoviy svit, 2003), 301.

¹⁰ Yuriy Korogods'kyi, "Vtracheni pokolinnya: Skil'ki Ukrainstiv znischiv stalins'kiy teror," *Espresso*, May 21, 2017, https://espresso.tv/article/2017/05/21/vtracheni_pokolinnya_skilky_ukrayinciv_znyschiv_stalinskyy_teror.

those citizens who actively resisted by publicly manifesting their disagreement with this policy.¹¹

However, in the Ukrainian case, it turned out that collective human behavior is much more complex than the Soviet and modern Russian social engineers could imagine. Their conviction that, within two or three generations, it would be possible to entirely transform the values and behavior patterns of a people who had been shaped for centuries by experiences leading them in a completely different direction, turned out to be wrong in the case of Ukraine. This was confirmed by Ukrainians, who voted almost unanimously (more than 91%)¹² in the 1991 referendum for their independence. Only a slim segment of the Ukrainian population, consisting mostly of recent arrivals from Russia and other republics of the former USSR as mid-level managers, military pensioners, and skilled workers, who were professionally dependent on stable economic ties between the former USSR republics, voted against independence. Therefore, it became evident that the constant drumbeat of Communist propaganda and assimilation pressures aimed at the population of Ukraine, which were intended to make them into not only a Soviet people but to Russify them as well, did not achieve their goal.

The first decade of independence, the 1990s, was the time when Ukraine began to develop along its own path, taking a different route from that followed by Russia or Belarus. This became a decisive turning point for the Ukrainians as they sought to get out from under the influence of their former Soviet tutelage. There were several objective reasons for their choosing such a path.

¹¹ This is known as Khrushchev's "thaw" and the accompanying '60s movement, along with attempts to decentralize the Soviet system, and implement economic changes together with the liberalization of cultural life. See: <https://osvita.ua/vnz/reports/history/4743/>.

¹² "The December 1, 1991 Referendum/Presidential Election in Ukraine," <https://www.csce.gov/sites/helsinkicommission.house.gov/files/120191UkraineReferendum.pdf>.

First, Ukraine had significantly fewer natural resources suitable for appropriation by the new rich than the Russian Federation had inherited from the USSR. Therefore, its natural resources could not become an economic basis for the political monopoly of a small group of citizens—as it was in Russia. At the same time, the industrial enterprises of Ukraine, after a process of pseudo-privatization, constituted much smaller assets than did Russia's supply of natural resources, the latter of which lent themselves to the creation of a monopoly. Nevertheless, the valuable scattered assets became the basis for the formation of both dispersed oligarchies and rival oligarchic clans in Ukraine, at both regional and local levels. This led to the formation of competing clienteles independent of each other and the state machine, accordingly. These regional and local clienteles, in turn, became the basis for the formation of national and regional political groups and parties, thus creating a competitive political environment. In this way, both among the economic elite and the majority of the population, Ukraine continued to develop democratic notions and elaborated the skills of political competition based on the conception that it is better to negotiate with strong opponents rather than to fight because one can miscalculate their strength and then lose everything. All this, of course, did not impede the emergence of populist attitudes in society. However, in the context of a real political struggle for resources, this also created competition among different types of populism. This also helped to support and develop pluralistic thinking among citizens, which in turn fostered democracy.

It is also worth noting that the Ukrainian oligarchs, the owners of enterprises, were not just rent-seekers but also diligent managers and industrious producers. In order to withstand the competition, they had to have high professional qualifications, which significantly raised the bar for Ukrainian politicians, intellectually speaking. Since no oligarchic group could monopolize

and purge the political environment of the country of its competitors, they were all forced to rely on different segments of the population to seek political equilibrium through the use of democratic institutions, primarily parliament and councils of various levels, as well as various institutions and procedures, especially elections.

Secondly, it should be emphasized that despite long-term efforts, the Moscow authorities did not manage to destroy the Ukrainian peasantry (small farmers), which at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union made up at least 30% of the population of Ukraine. Taking into consideration the climate and natural fertility of the land and the skills needed for its independent, single-family management, which were not lost during the years of totalitarianism, a big part of the population of Ukraine remained henceforth almost entirely independent on the state in order to meet its basic needs in terms of food and essentials. In addition, even in Soviet times, cooperation in the field of processing agricultural products continued to exist in Ukraine. The participation of such a large part of the population in different self-reliant economic activities also helped to preserve the spirit of economic and personal freedom among Ukrainian peasants. Therefore, one may conclude that paternalistic and pro-Russian, as well as undemocratic sentiments in Ukraine were strongest in those regions where the population was less connected with private agricultural production and therefore was strongly dependent on the state for its basic needs. Later, after Ukraine gained its independence, just these people became obedient subjects of political manipulation by those oligarchs who took over the enterprises where they worked.

Thirdly, a middle class made up of numerous small producers, independent of the state, quickly arose during the 1990s. Such people are a necessary part of the foundations of a democratic form of government. The

economic reforms implemented under President Leonid Kuchma (1994–2004) created conditions for the growth of the middle class' well-being and therefore strengthened their political independence and self-awareness. This social stratum became the political and economic engine of the Orange Revolution of 2004, which made the process of democratic consolidation in Ukraine. During the 2004 revolution, just from amongst these people, the powerful volunteer movement was born and formed in Ukraine.

Various groups supporting the 2004 Orange Revolution (also known as the first Maidan)¹³ with such supplies as food, warm clothes, tents, and blankets quickly formed an extensive network throughout the country. These people, volunteers of the first Maidan, became the basis and driving force of national support for the Euro-Maidan of 2013–2014. In addition, the Orange Revolution accelerated the development of various political parties, supported religious, gender, and educational pluralism, and, as it turned out, finally determined the vector of the state's development *towards Europe*. In the minds of Ukrainians, the *Euro-* prefix has gained the reputation of being a good "brand," to denote something that is of high quality and desirable: *Euro-windows, Euro-renovation, Euro-doors*,¹⁴ and therefore *Euro-Maidan 2014* became a real turn towards European integration, which has become a tangible goal for the vast majority of young people and active citizens.

Fourthly, the revolution of 2004 became at the same time not only a manifestation but also a powerful catalyst of civil society in Ukraine. Civil

¹³ Maidan, the Revolution of Dignity, also known as the Maidan Revolution or the Euromaidan (so called because it was a demonstration in favor of Ukraine's eventual EU candidacy) and the Ukrainian Revolution. The Revolution of Dignity phase took place in Ukraine in February 2014 at the end of the Euromaidan protests, when deadly clashes between protesters and the security forces in the capital Kyiv culminated in the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovich, the overthrow of the Ukrainian government, and the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War.

¹⁴ In common parlance in modern Ukrainian, the prefix *Euro-* has come to mean "something of near-perfect quality." By the same token that a label reading "Made in USA" can serve as a good national "brand," so does *Euro-* in Ukraine today.

society is based on horizontal networks of connections, both between individual citizens and voluntary associations of citizens.¹⁵ These, in turn, cannot be effective without a high level of trust between participants and a high sense of responsibility of each participant to themselves and their partners, and this takes us into the sphere of action, of morality, and of beliefs. Thus, the Orange Revolution achieved its primary goal: it cemented the transformation of Ukrainian society from the Soviet to a modern European-style democratic society. That is why the protégés of Muscovy—Yanukovich and his henchmen (mostly Russian agents)—and their attempt to change the direction of the state’s development in 2013 were utterly defeated. Instead, the events of the winter of 2013–2014 in Kyiv and other cities of Ukraine only stimulated the rapid development of civil unity and its main driver: the volunteer movement.

The volunteer movement as the main factor in the development and formation of civil society in Ukraine, 2013–2022

The remarkably rapid development of the volunteer movement in Ukraine became highly visible during the Revolution of Dignity in the winter of 2013–2014. The violent crackdown on the student-led Euro-Maidan by the authorities, after which the “march of millions” passed through Kyiv, reviving the diligent work of existing volunteer groups, and became the starting point for the emergence of numerous new support groups for protesters across Ukraine.¹⁶ Large crowds gathered in displays of solidarity with the Euromaidan,

¹⁵ Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 256.

¹⁶ “Na Maydane naschitali million demonstrantov,” LB.ua (Ukrainian online newspaper), December 8, 2013,

and actions of civil disobedience began to take place regularly in various cities. In addition, a social movement of mutual aid, support, and unity, unprecedented in scale, began. Practically simultaneously with the spontaneous organization of the Maidan¹⁷ (or, more precisely, Maidans, throughout Ukraine), the movement of concerned citizens began to form. For these citizens, aside from their personal participation in mass protests, it was important to provide comprehensive support to Kyiv's and other cities' Maidans with food, water, medicine, tents, heating devices, hygiene, socks, thermal underwear, blankets, mats, money, etc.

At first, the people of Kyiv immediately organized such support teams, gathering in numerous mobile groups. Citizens in their cars began to bring different supplies that were needed to the Maidan defenders and to picket the residences of President Yanukovich and many government officials, blocking the way of the police. Over the next few days, engaged citizens from various towns and villages of the state began to join them.

The subsequent course of events on the Maidan took the form of frequent assaults on the protestors' camp by the police, a general atmosphere of confrontation with President Yanukovich and his henchmen, and anxiety about the "European" future of the state, which significantly intensified the citizens' desire for unity, mutual aid, and support. In many cities and villages, volunteer "fraternities" of like-minded people emerged overnight, deliberating and delegating areas of responsibility, functions, and duties to different groups of the Maidan support network. Afterwards, these initially spontaneous relationships established during the first weeks of the Maidan, between

https://rus.lb.ua/news/2013/12/08/245206_maydane_naschitali_million.html; According to the article, more than a million citizens gathered in the center of Kyiv on that day, mostly local citizens outraged by the brutality of the authorities against a peaceful student protest.

¹⁷ *Maidan* is a term for a central city square in Ukrainian. Since the 2004 Orange Revolution it has also been used to mean a mass gathering of protestors.

different volunteer groups, which rapidly turned into networks of deep mutual understanding, asserted their durability during the Russian invasion of Crimea and the Donbas region. They became a base of long-term reliable cooperation, which played a decisive role in supporting the military during the first months of resistance to the Russian invasion in 2014 and 2015. These engaged citizens, united by their support of the Maidan, first responded to calls for help from the Ukrainian Army and became the backbone of volunteer battalions.

After the Maidan Revolution of 2014, the participants of the already fully formed Ukrainian volunteer movement could quickly understand the basic needs of supplying the Ukrainian Army units and quickly began to meet these. At that time, the lousy provision of the Army in terms of basic goods (clothing, medicine, food, etc.) was brought to the attention of volunteer activists, who took on a much higher level of responsibility than they had even during the Maidan Revolution. They turned from suppliers of what was needed mainly connected by people who knew each other, into a de facto service of provisioning the Army and helping refugees, a service of rescuing victims of shelling and other similar activities.

In fact, during the spring of 2014, the formation of local volunteer organizations became widespread throughout Ukraine. In the West and the Center of the country, this process had begun back in 2004, and in the winter of 2013–2014 it simply gained further development. In the summer of 2014, citizens of the regions that had just become border zones in a “hot” military conflict (the areas around the cities of Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Zaporizhia) also began to organize massive local volunteer groups and mutual aid centers, shelters for refugees from the war zone, medical centers, the collection of food and goods for refugees, and so on. For the citizens of these regions, it was the events of the spring and summer of 2014 that initiated a rapid civic awakening

and the emergence of a conscious understanding of civic solidarity and citizenship awareness.

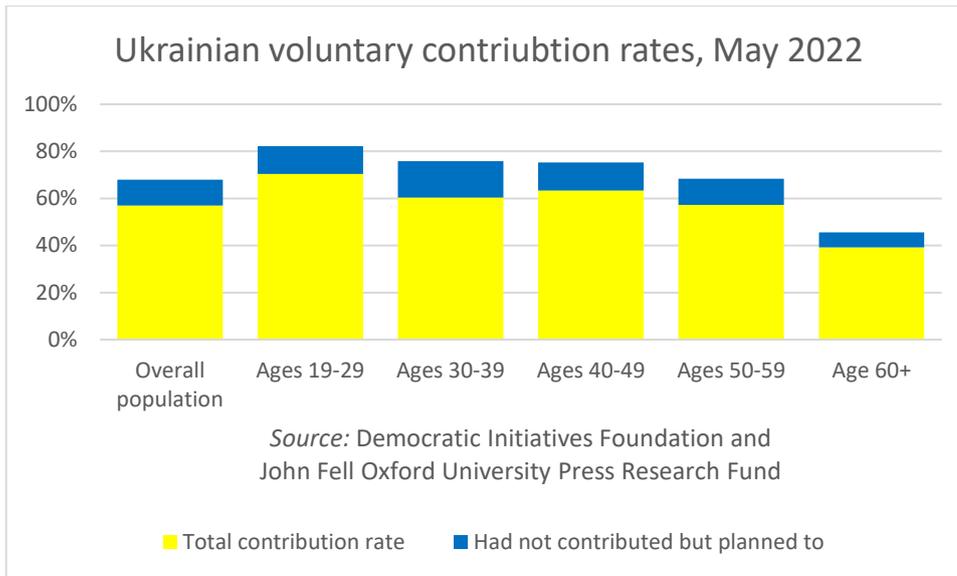
In October 2014, the Democratic Initiatives Foundation conducted a survey.¹⁸ Among other questions, they asked, “Have you provided charitable assistance to the Ukrainian military and the population suffering from the military conflict in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions?” In response to this question, 32.5% of those polled claimed that from May to September 2014 they had donated funds to the accounts of the Ukrainian Army. Another 23% contributed aid through charitable foundations and volunteer organizations, donating money and products through them, and 9% took part in putting together grocery kits organized in stores and supermarkets. People bought goods (mainly food and hygiene products) and handed them out to volunteers to further provide support to the men serving in the military. At the same time, 7% of those polled personally helped displaced people with goods and money, and 3% of citizens personally collected funds, medicine, and goods and delivered them to the front lines.

Eight years later, with the beginning of the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation, the number of Ukrainian citizens participating in volunteer activities has increased significantly throughout the country. Thus, according to a survey conducted in mid-May 2022 by the same Democratic Initiatives Foundation, together with the John Fell Oxford University Press Research Fund,¹⁹ 20.5% of respondents had provided both material and financial assistance to the Army, territorial defense units (that is, citizen militias), or

¹⁸ “Ukraintsi nadayut’ blarodiynu dopomogu viys’kovim ta naseleunnyu, yaki strazhdayut’ vid konfliktiv v zoni ato,” n.d.

<http://dobrispravy.com.ua/news/ukrajintsi-nadajut-blahodijnu-dopomohu-vijckovim-ta-nacelennju-jaki-ctrazhdajut-vid-konfliktiv-vzoni-ato.html>.

¹⁹ “Samopochuttya Ukraintsiv pid chas viyni: Emotsii, ochikuvannya, osobistiy dosvid—opituvannya u zakhidnikh ta tsentral’nikh regionakh,” Fond Demokratichni initsiativi imeni Il’ka Kycheriva, June 7, 2022, <https://dif.org.ua/article/samopochuttya-ukraintsiv-pid-chas-viyni-emotsii-ochikuvannya-osobistiy-dosvid-opituvannya-u-zakhidnikh-ta-tsentralnikh-regionakh> -.



	Overall population	Ages 19-29	Ages 30-39	Ages 40-49	Ages 50-59	Age 60+
Total contribution rate	57.0%	70.4%	60.4%	63.4%	57.2%	39.2%
Had not contributed but planned to	11.0%	11.8%	15.4%	11.9%	11.2%	6.4%
Had not contributed and did not plan to	23.0%	15.3%	19.5%	16.6%	24.3%	33.7%

displaced individuals; 24% of those polled had contributed only financially; and 12.5% had done so only materially—for a total contribution rate of 57%. Another 11% of those polled did not participate in volunteering or charity work, but planned to do so soon. Only 23% of respondents noted that they did not participate in volunteer work and did not plan to do so.

A more qualitatively important picture emerges when we look at the poll results from the point of view of the age of the respondents. It turns out that respondents between the ages of 19 and 29 volunteered to help fellow citizens and the Army in the following manner: 70.4% of those polled provided both material and financial help to the Army or the territorial defense units and to displaced persons; 11.8% of those polled were planning to do so shortly; and only 15.3% did not plan any participation. Citizens in the age group of 30 to 39-

year-olds demonstrated somewhat lower rates of volunteerism: 60.4% belong to the first group polled, 15.4% to the second, and 19.5% to the third, respectively. Groups of interviewees aged 40-49 and 50-59 demonstrated similar results: 63.4%, 11.9% and 16.6%, and 57.2%, 11.2% and 24.3%, respectively. However, even in the group of pensioners (60+), the percentage of people participating in volunteer activities is quite high. The division is: 39.2%, 6.4%, and 33.7%, respectively.

Based on the latest survey, it appears that the vast majority of citizens are actively involved in volunteer activities now, and therefore participating in extensive horizontal networks of support, both among neighbors and in networks that have strong connections throughout the country.

This is what, for example, participation in volunteer activities by residents of an apartment building in Kyiv looks like. All the residents are united in a group chat on Telegram (a social media and chat app). In this chat, someone posts an ad that he or she needs help chopping vegetables to make dry soups for the soldiers of the armed forces. Immediately, several people volunteer to cut and dry these vegetables. Another volunteer offers anyone willing to join in to knit camouflage nets. Right then, the whole house first collects old things, cuts them into ribbons, and then enthusiastically starts weaving the nets. In another known case, one of the residents asks if anyone has acquaintances in a particular city because he wants to transfer funds to purchase medicine for wounded soldiers being treated in a hospital there. Immediately, someone announces that he has relatives there and is ready to help transfer funds, to buy medicine, and deliver them to the people in need.

In many communities, volunteers weave talismans for the soldiers. Their children enthusiastically write invigorating letters to the soldiers on the front

lines, aiming to maintain their fighting spirit and allay sadness, mitigate fear and feelings of loneliness, and spread well-wishes, through the constant reminder that they are awaited at home. Every Ukrainian soldier regularly receives such letters and charms, along with personal hygiene items, socks, and children's drawings. All these trinkets are individualized. They come from a specific child or volunteer, which increases their emotional value and boost to morale for the recipients. It is important to emphasize that citizens do all this voluntarily, out of the goodness of their own hearts.

The role of women volunteers in modern Ukraine deserves a special mention. Among active volunteers, the percentage of women during the period from 2014 through 2021 was always quite high, especially among those who were engaged in supplying medicine, cooking, and weaving camouflage nets. But with the beginning of the war, when most of the active male volunteers went away to the battle front, women volunteers began to dominate the movement in almost all areas, except in the supply of software and weapons. If one wants to better understand the share of the contribution of women volunteers to the protection of democracy in Ukraine, it is important to keep in mind the fact that, long before the war, women played an active role in businesses and entrepreneurship. According to experts, they represented 28.7% of microbusiness owners, 27.4% of medium-sized business owners, and 22.7% was among small and large business owners. Before the war, the percentage of female company managers across all business sizes was 30.6% in Ukraine, compared to 26% and 23% in the EU and North America, respectively.²⁰

²⁰ "Buti bil'she nizh 30%: Zhinki y biznesi v Ukraini ta sviti," Delo.ua, Biznes, November 9, 2018, <https://delo.ua/business/buti-bilshe-nizh-30-zhinki-u-biznesi-v-ukrajini-347717/>.

Since the beginning of the war, the number of women top-level managers has increased significantly, as well as the number of women coordinators and members of volunteer organizations. Although records are not being kept due to the war, participants in the volunteer movement testify that women make up a sizable majority of volunteers, especially those who are involved in helping the wounded, supplying medicine, cooking, making clothes, and sending various kinds of supplies for the soldiers at the front. They lead different crowd-funding organizations, supporting innovations in all spheres of life in Ukraine. These women do not only work as self-employed, but they also often employ people temporarily displaced from the occupied territories.²¹ One can find many stories about women volunteers in the media, and recently a separate book of stories of real women connected with the war has been published.²²

There are also several websites in Ukraine where one can find detailed information about volunteering and a list of the largest organizations that provide ongoing assistance to all those who need it. Therefore anyone, at any time, can join in the volunteer activities.

The following is an essential list of problems that these volunteers are trying to mitigate or solve:

- Fundraising for providing the armed forces with ammunition and military equipment, helicopters, and medications;
- Evacuation and transportation of refugees and displaced persons;
- Fundraising for donations, first-aid kits, and medicines;

²¹ Yaroslava Timoschuk, “Odyagnyti biytsya: Yak miniatel’ e stalo chkhom, de shiyut’ viys’kovu amynitsiyu, ta pereyshlo vid volonterstva do biznesu,” July 6, 2022, from: <https://texty.org.ua/articles/107165/odyahnuty-bijcya-yak-miniatelye-stalo-cehom-de-shyyut-vijskovu-amuniciyu-ta-perejshlo-vid-volonterstva-do-biznesu/>.

²² Anna Shyla, *Woman of War* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2020), 352, <https://nashformat.ua/products/woman-of-war-924997>.

- Searching for children and their parents who were lost during hostilities or evacuation;
- Finding shelter for refugees and collecting funds and supplies for their maintenance;
- Providing refugees with clothes, food, medicine, and necessities;
- Rescuing animals from the war zone;
- Assistance to elderly people living alone; and
- Informational support.

According to their professional education and capabilities, volunteers also provide free assistance to all people in need. First and foremost, they afford a psychological, medical, legal, and advertising services; tailoring and cooking assistance; appliance repairs; etc. However, the main activity of volunteer organizations today is explicitly aimed at providing for the needs of the Ukrainian Army, military personnel, and citizens suffering from the war.

Today, different regional and local volunteer organizations operate throughout Ukraine; they bring together citizens in large cities and in small villages. For example, in Kyiv, the activities of volunteer associations are aimed at helping society in the following areas:

- The Cartographic Unit public association: creation of electronic and paper maps, special computer programs, and navigators for the needs of the army and territorial militias;
- The People's Rear Guard public association is one of the largest volunteer organizations in Ukraine, and is mainly engaged in supplying the Army with ammunition;
- The headquarters of the volunteer organizations SOS Army, Return Alive, Volunteer Unit, and Wings of the Phoenix take care of the wounded and search for the missing;

- The Matrix of Technologies engages in the production of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs, or drones) and other military technologies;
- Volunteers of the Kyiv City Association of Veterans of Afghanistan collect, purchase, and deliver humanitarian aid to military units;
- The Everybody Can Help volunteer association provides aid to military personnel, as well as injured civilians and forced migrants;
- DemAlliance Help offers psychological, legal, and informational assistance to soldiers and their families, and maintains collection and distribution points for clothing and other goods;
- The Heroes of the ATO (Anti-Terrorist Operation) volunteer group collects and systematizes information about wounded fighters;
- The Ecology and Health public association, established in 1997, promotes a healthy lifestyle and helps with the supply of medicine;
- The Volunteers without Borders association of patriots buys and delivers necessary items, personally delivering them to the military;
- The Volunteer Net Battalion Movement public association manufactures camouflage nets and camouflage suits, and purchases and collects clothes for the military;
- The Cooking Unit of the capital prepares food and dry rations; and
- The Mir and Co. Foundation helps refugees.

A similar list of organizations can be compiled in almost every major city in Ukraine. It is important to emphasize here that this dedication to the volunteer movement of many Ukrainian citizens, despite the war, constant danger, and psychological pressure for such a long time, draws its strength from those high moral qualities inherent in most volunteers, including honesty, trust, mutual respect, equality, hard work, self-sacrifice, modesty, dedication, responsibility, and altruism. Today, thousands of people in Ukraine voluntarily

work and donate, collect funds, make purchases and deliveries, stand in line at the borders, and go to the front lines to get their fellow citizens out of the war zone. Undoubtedly, such people must have strong moral convictions and a capacity for self-sacrifice.

Conclusions

An analysis of the civic actions of various social groups involved in volunteering allows for drawing important conclusions.

- The volunteer activities of Ukrainians enjoy nationwide support and are spread throughout the territory of Ukraine. Representatives of various social groups are involved in this activity and working together. Joining volunteer organizations occurs based on various unifying factors: friendly relations, belonging to the same territorial community, common social affiliations, profession, skills necessary for performing specific volunteer activities, etc. The diversity found among public volunteer groups' members (from entrepreneurs to artists to soccer fans), who play different roles in the country's social and economic development, can be considered a confirmation of the general nature of democratic transformations taking place in Ukrainian civil society.

It can be argued that the events of recent years have forced a significant part of Ukrainian society to become genuinely engaged citizens. Thus, the paternalistic matrix of political culture, enforced for centuries by Russian imperialists, did not take root in Ukrainian soil. The participation of school children in volunteer activities, primarily in such projects as writing letters to soldiers and drawing pictures of them, spontaneously spread all over Ukraine. This will likely contribute to the education of the following generations of engaged citizens.

In many urban and rural communities, young people also willingly participate in weaving camouflage nets, organizing charity fairs, making souvenirs and drawings, and baking homemade cookies. They are donating the proceeds from their sales to volunteers put in charge of procurement, or just buying the products themselves to give them directly to the soldiers. Such participation in community life is an important factor in the formation of an active and responsible civic position among the generation of future citizens.

Massive and diverse volunteer experiences have become a valuable gain among almost all social strata of the population throughout Ukraine today. It has become, in fact, the basis for the formation of a new common collective memory. This common memory of collective efforts, of shared hardships and successes, in turn, is the basis for the further development of a civic consciousness and the creation of a new political nation based on new narratives, common values, and common goals. The social and political activities of volunteers create a high level of trust amongst them, with the massive involvement of citizens of all ages (from elementary school students to pensioners) and social stations (businessmen and entrepreneurs, teachers, artists, sports fans, representatives of show business, drivers, IT managers, doctors, etc.). This creates a life-giving environment for the formation of a new generation of public and political figures.

Thus, in addition to performing their purely common functions of supply and assistance, volunteers also play an important role in the strengthening of political interactions between civil society and state officials. It is clear that it was the volunteers who forced the current government to intensify its dialog with civil society, which contributes to an increase the level of public trust in the government on the one hand and the level of responsibility of the government to civil-society actors on the other. As a result, the effectiveness of

their interactions has increased significantly. Today's volunteers are citizens with the highest rating of public trust, which makes them highly visible and influential political figures at the regional and national levels.²³

The active phase of the war, which began on February 24, 2022, only strengthened the democratic course of the development of Ukrainian society. The war, affecting every citizen, rigidly posed a simple question to every Ukrainian citizen: do you want to be an obedient tool of an authoritarian state, to be a senseless cog in a wheel in its merciless destructive machine—or do you want to join together with your friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens to fight for the new Ukraine to become a member of the free democratic world and, finally, to win?

Ukrainians, as we can see, unanimously chose the option to win. Moreover, now, united around their choice to become a part of the free democratic realm, the citizens of Ukraine confidently look to the future and believe in their victory, while fighting and actively working to ensure that it is achieved as soon as possible.

²³ As of January 2022, more than 68% of survey respondents said they trusted volunteers. “Dynamic of Trust in Social Institutions During 2020–2021: The Results of a Telephone Survey,” Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, January 26, 2022, <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=1093&page=1>.