CONSOLIDATIONS OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY AND CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE WAR CONDITIONS

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SUMMARY

The article, based on extensive empirical material and thorough sociological research, analyzes the consolidation of Ukrainian society and challenges to public administration in the conditions of a full-scale war. The factors of the consolidation of society are determined. Emphasis is placed on the stability of Ukrainians, the presence of a political leader, and the functioning of authorities in wartime conditions.

Keywords: *Ukraine, Ukrainian society, consolidation, cohesion, sustainability, public administration, full-scale war.*

A few days before the beginning of the full-scale war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the decree of the President of Ukraine "On Urgent Measures for the Consolidation of Ukrainian Society" was issued, that emphasized the strengthening of the consolidation of Ukrainian society, strengthening its stability in the conditions of the growth of hybrid threats, informational and propaganda, moral and psychological pressure on public consciousness [**1**], and Unity Day was established as a symbol of the consolidation of Ukrainian society.

The war mobilized Ukrainian society (including its Russian-speaking part) together with the President, the Government, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and other state institutions. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine led to the consolidation of citizens and strengthened the sense of civic belonging among the people. Since the beginning of the Russian aggression, Ukrainian society, as well as the military, central and local authorities, have shown courage, stability and determination in confronting the aggressor, the ability to unite in the face of a threat; demonstrated the ability to perform effective

actions in extremely difficult conditions; to build effective social mechanisms for overcoming crises, showed concern for each other.

In the conditions of the full-scale war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the factors of consolidation of Ukrainian society became: unity in the understanding of belonging to Ukrainian society; the fortitude of the Ukrainian nation and the ability to resist the enemy; commitment to democracy and freedom; desire for freedom and independence; consolidation of all branches of government; cohesion of local self-government bodies; common history, cultural heritage; uniting society around the Armed Forces of Ukraine; trust in the authorities; having the shared experiences in the conditions of war; informational telethon "Yedyni Novyny" (News of Unity); the rallying of Ukrainians around the protection of the Ukrainian language and a sharp increase in the share of those who speak mainly Ukrainian in everyday life; unity of views on the process of de-Russification; aspiration to join the European Union and NATO; views on the future, which depends on today's decisions and actions.

Consolidation, cohesion, and unity of Ukrainian society became key indicators of public attitudes in wartime conditions, which was widely confirmed in a number of sociological studies. The vast majority of surveyed citizens firmly identify with the Ukrainian state and are proud to be Ukrainians. According to the results of a sociological survey conducted in December 2022 by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 95% of respondents associate themselves with Ukrainian nationality, less than 2% – Russian, 1% – both Ukrainian and Russian, and 2% - other. In particular, even in the south and east, as many as 90% associate themselves with Ukrainian nationality, while five years ago there were 64% **[2]**. Sociologists say: the differences between east and west, between men and women, between the older generation and the younger regarding ideological values, attitudes toward war, the state, and the president have disappeared in our country **[3]**.

During the war, three quarters of Ukrainians (74%) assessed the direction of the country's development as correct **[4]**. Such indicators have never been seen in peacetime. According to the results of the sociological study "Trust in the State: How to Preserve National Unity for the Sake of Victory" by the "Democratic Initiatives" Foundation, as of August 2022, the level of trust among Ukrainians in all state bodies and social institutions that were included in the survey has increased. The exception is low trust in political parties. The growth of public trust testified to the high level of social cohesion of citizens. Society has united around the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which have won the trust of 98% of respondents.

In the conditions of a full-scale war, one of the primary tasks that was successfully implemented was ensuring the stability of the authorities. During this period, the tendency to form a "single mobilized vertical of executive power" led by the President is intensifying. Military state administrations of Ukraine were established throughout the country in regions and districts to exercise leadership in the field of defense, public security, and local order. Evaluating this situation, the Adviser to the Head of the President's office, Mykhailo Podolyak, noted: "That's why all branches of government work in a unified mode now. For peacetime, of course, this would not be normal. And now it is optimal when there is a key manager who takes on foreign policy, economic, and

military functions" (3). Ukrainian society and the entire civilized world recognized the leadership of the President of Ukraine.

According to the results of a sociological study by the Razumkov Center (February–March 2023), the government does its best in solving problems in the following areas: national defense (82% of respondents answered that the government does it "very well" or "rather well", only 13% – which is "very bad" or "rather bad"), energy supply (80% and 16%, respectively), foreign policy (75% and 15.5%, respectively), education (56% and 29.5%, respectively), health care (respectively 54% and 36%), social protection and pension provision (respectively 53% and 37%) **[5]**. This is a fairly high assessment of the activities of the authorities in wartime conditions.

Regarding the quality of functioning of state bodies and the quality of social services in Ukraine during the war, for the most part, Ukrainians did not personally encounter the improper work of state bodies or institutions such as the police, Territorial centers of recruitment and social support, Centers for the provision of administrative services, pension funds, schools, etc. **[5]**. Only 9% of respondents mentioned healthcare institutions in this context, but other state institutions were mentioned even less often **[6]**. Despite constant rocket attacks, destruction of buildings, damage to critical infrastructure, endless air raids, the country continued to live and fight against Russian aggression.

Community leaders and activists were not afraid to take on the responsibility of remaining in the community and working under martial law conditions, demonstrating the stability of local self-government in the territories controlled by Ukraine and under occupation. Only five months after the start of the war, the occupiers kidnapped 54 local government officials, including 26 heads of communities. American journalist, author of books about crimes of totalitarian regimes Ann Applebaum noted: "they (Russians – Author) thought that they were entering a territory ruled by a small insecure and unpopular elite that needed to be demolished: arrested, killed, expelled or deported. They thought that it would not be difficult" **[7]**. Reality refuted the intentions of the ruscists. The heads of military state administrations and heads of communities ensured the livelihood of territorial communities, helped internally displaced persons and the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Quality communication became an important component of ensuring effective public administration in a state of martial law: communication between the authorities and civil society, between authorities and mass media, between organizations representing different regions of the country, different branches of government, etc. In the conditions of war, unity, constant communication, mutual support and interaction between authorities and local self-government of all levels and society make it possible to successfully resist Russian aggression.

In order to inform the domestic and foreign public about the situation in Ukraine, from the first day of the war, the informational telethon "Yedyni Novyny" (News of Unity) began to operate, which took on the functions of fighting on the media front and became a means of counteraction in the information war launched by the Russian Federation and an important tool for conveying Ukraine's position to the foreign the viewer. After a year of the telethon, the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, noted that "Yedyni Novyny" "played an important role in the formation of social unity

and trust in the conditions of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine" **[9]**.

The President's daily addresses to the Ukrainian people became an important factor in the consolidation of society. Note that in the first weeks of the war, the President of Ukraine addressed Ukrainians twice a day. "In the war with the Russian Federation, he (Volodymyr Zelenskyy – Author) contrasted the humanity, unity of Ukrainians, strong political appeals and the ability of his team to control the situation in the country against the notorious "second army of the world" **[10]**. Political scientist Jessica Pisano claimed that "Zelenskyy's leadership model encouraged Ukrainian society to self-mobilize for common goals, forcing everyone to "do one's part from one's place" as he deems necessary to achieve victory" **[11]**.

As it was mentioned earlier, the unifying factor for Ukrainian society was the aspiration to join the European Union and NATO. Thus, according to the results of a nationwide survey conducted by the Sociological Group "Rating" on October 1-2, 2022, 86% of respondents would support Ukraine's accession to the European Union in the event of a referendum (3% against, 7% would not vote) **[12]**. Support for joining the EU is unanimous among representatives of all macro-regions and age groups. Support for joining NATO is the highest in the history of observations: 83% would support this initiative in a referendum, 4% would be against it, 9% would not vote (and even in June 2022, 76% of respondents supported joining the Alliance) **[12]**. In contrast to joining the EU, joining NATO is perceived somewhat more cautiously by residents of the east of the country (69% – for joining, 9% – against, 17% - would not come to vote). Despite this, compared to the previous survey, the dynamics of support for joining the Alliance among residents of this macro-region is very positive (55% in favor, 20% against, 22% would not vote) **[12]**.

The factor that contributed to the unification of Ukrainian society was the living of common experiences in the conditions of war (air raids, shelling, traumatic and painful events, concern for the lives of loved ones, lack of electricity). Dennis Soltys, in an article with the rather eloquent title "Ukraine's Nation-building Progress Spells Doom for Putin's Russian Empire" noted that "The war has also fostered national integration within Ukraine by fueling unprecedented interaction among people from different regions of the country. This integration has been happening as Russian missiles and bombs fall equally on Ukrainian citizens regardless of their region, ethnicity, or worldview" **[8]**.

Consolidation and stability of the Ukrainian people in the conditions of war manifests itself in a rather diverse and multifaceted way. For example, the Ukraïner community and organization, which has been researching Ukraine and the Ukrainian context since 2016, tells the stories of Ukrainians themselves, and also broadcasts them to the world, translating them into dozens of languages. With the beginning of the war, the column «Ukraine Resists» appeared. After their liberation, a number of films were shot about the «Brave Cities that Resisted»: «How Kherson Resisted», «Resistance of Vovchansk. How our people went to the border of the Russian Federation» **[13]**.

NGO Art Association "Plai" (Vinnytsia city) created the documentary series "We are from Ukraine". The project tells stories about the lives of 22 contemporary cultural figures. The value of the tape is that it presents reflections on the war, ideas about the importance of the Ukrainian language, as well as how they can be correctly conveyed

by people who deeply understand what this value is. "There is no question of politics or anything material here. The priority is the crystallized value of the entire nation. Cultural figures as avengers, as preachers, convey the whole meaning to people. It is important for us that it reaches the society, Ukrainians are awesome. That's exactly the word" **[14]**.

In the conditions of war, a commonwealth of hatred is formed - not only for the Russian state, the Russian government and the invading army, but also for almost everything Russian. Hatred became the most powerful catalyst for the crystallization of the Ukrainian political nation. About 73% of Ukrainians approve of the state decision to condemn the USSR as a communist totalitarian regime that carried out a policy of state terror **[15]**. This opinion dominates in all regions, with no more than 14% disagreeing with it (about 14% in the south and 12% in the east of Ukraine) **[15]**. The majority of Ukrainians (about 59%) support the renaming of toponyms, the names of which are associated with the Russian Federation/USSR/Russian Empire. Supporters of renaming are the majority in all regions, except the south. At the same time, in all regions, except the west, a significant part of people (20–28%) shows indifference to the topic of renaming toponyms **[15].** Professor Paul Kolste of the University of Oslo emphasized that "the thunder of the cannons in the Russian invasion sounded the death knell to a common Ukrainian-Russian identity. More than any other individual, Putin has contributed not only to the crystallization of a separate Ukrainian identity but also to the consolidation of a Ukrainian nation, which defines itself, first and foremost, as profoundly different from the Russians" **[16]**.

The war silenced political disputes, uniting politicians of different parties, ideologies, preferences around the country's national interests.

An important factor in the consolidation of society was the attitude towards pro-Russian parties. Note that for a long time their activities have been a challenge for public administration. Even the very names of the parties generated negative emotions: Party "Rus-Ukrainian Union", "Soyuz" Party, "Rus Unity" Political Party, "Rus Bloc" Party, "Putin's Politics Party". In addition, there were parties with clearly expressed pro-Russian positions: Political party "Opposition Block", political party "Opposition Platform for Life", political party "Ours", political party "Party of Anatoliy Shariy", political party "Volodymyr Saldo Block", Communist Party of Ukraine, Political Party "State", Political Party "Left Opposition", Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, Workers' Party of Ukraine, Political Party of Ukraine "United Rus", political party "Socialists", Socialist Party of Ukraine, Political Party "Union of Left Forces", political party "Justice and Development", political party "Happy Ukraine".

The full-scale war became the catalyst for banning pro-Russian parties in Ukraine. A law was passed on the ban of pro-Russian parties, according to which the court can ban a political party for justifying, recognizing as legitimate, denying armed aggression against Ukraine, in particular by presenting Russian aggression as an internal conflict or civil war **[17]**. 90% of Ukrainians support the ban on pro-Russian parties. The activities of pro-Russian public organizations are also prohibited. Parties have the lowest level of trust among all social institutions (63% of citizens do not trust political parties, and only 16% of Ukrainians trust them (February–March 2023)) **[5]**. It is also important that due to the dissolution or banning of pro-Russian parties, the parliamentary opposition has shrunk.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the value scale of Ukrainians in the condi-

tions of a full-scale war has undergone minor changes. In general, there was a trend towards the values of self-determination and openness to change; values such as universalism and kindness were already dominant; the values of security and traditionality were significant. As last year, Ukrainians valued wealth the least. Over the year, values of traditionality, hedonism, stimulation, and especially independence increased a bit **[4]**.

During his visit to Ukraine, US President Joe Biden said: "Ukrainians have shown themselves in a way that very few nations have ever shown themselves in their defense. And they helped us understand the meaning of democracy" **[18]**. For 94% of Ukrainians, it is important that Ukraine becomes a full-fledged democracy. In it, Ukrainians value: freedom of speech – 64%, fair justice for all – 60%, fair elections – 47% **[19]**. Ukrainians are fighting for democracy, freedom and people's rights to live in a just world; perceive this war as a war of totalitarianism against democracy; as a war of identities; as a war of two worlds; a war where there is a struggle for the principles of organizing life for future generations.

The vast majority of citizens believe and work for the victory of Ukraine. As in August, at the end of 2022, Ukrainians left with hope for a better future for themselves (54%) and the future of the country (60%) **[20]**. When thinking about their future, Ukrainians most often felt, in addition to hope, optimism (36%) and anxiety (33%) [20]. At the same time, Ukrainians look to the future of the state mainly with optimism (40%) and confidence (27%) **[20]**.

The war became a common challenge for Ukrainian society, contributed to increasing cohesion and a sense of unity. The process of establishing a consolidated Ukrainian state, its subjectivity in security, humanitarian, economic, social and spatial dimensions took place. The resilience of Ukrainians became a factor of struggle and faith in victory. The presence of a leader and trust in the authorities, constant and effective communication between the authorities and society, which provided conditions for a common understanding of events; close ties in the community, a strong network of support, a common goal are perceived as unifying factors for victory and peace.

An important task remains to preserve the synergy of actions of society and the state in the future. The success of post-war reconstruction will depend on the consolidation of Ukrainian society and balanced interaction between society and the central, regional and local authorities.

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