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**CIVIL SOCIETY OF UKRAINE DURING THE YEARS
OF THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR:
CHALLENGES, VALUE ORIENTATIONS (2014 – 2024)**

Abstract. *The purpose of the research is to clarify the main trends in the civil society organizations development in Ukraine, in particular, the volunteer movement, charitable organizations, non-governmental (public organizations). Research Methodology.* In the article there has been used an analytical approach to a retrospective analysis of the activities of non-governmental organizations in the society. The research is also based on the principles of systematicity, a concrete historical approach, a historical and systemic method. **The scientific novelty** consists in the fact that for the first time in historical sciences, the formation of a civil society in Ukraine has been elucidated through the prism of challenges that arose in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war of 2014 – 2024.

The Conclusions. After 2014, the Ukrainian civil society, responding to civilizational challenges and threats to the country's territorial integrity, qualitatively increased its influence and helped maintain the country's defense capabilities. Civil institutions become a driving force in the processes of establishing interaction between the authorities and citizens. A multifaceted support is provided by civil institutions (assistance in forced relocation from occupied settlements, a further care of internally relocated people, legal consultations, a psychological support, material subsidies, support to those

communities that will remain in the front-line territories, occupied and de-occupied regions) plays a significant role in countering disinformation, fixing the crimes of the Russian Federation, restoring the housing stock. Civil society organizations enjoy a lot of trust among the population and foreign funds, and owing to them, it is possible to accumulate a significant amount of funds from donations to solve both large-scale and specific requests of the Armed Forces, volunteer units.

During the full-scale invasion actualization of the grassroots public level proved that the Ukrainian civil society is capable of responding to crises quickly. Instead, a significant challenge for the further effective activity of these organizations is the problem of cooperation between organizations and funds, an effective distribution of financial resources, and maintenance of a stable level of activity.

Key words: civil society, normative legal act, law, volunteer movement, charitable organization, public organization, recognition, legitimacy.

ГРОМАДЯНСЬКЕ СУСПІЛЬСТВО УКРАЇНИ В РОКИ РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ВІЙНИ: ВИКЛИКИ, ЦІННІСНІ ОРІЄНТИРИ (2014 – 2024)

Анотація. Мета роботи – вивчення основних тенденцій розвитку, структур громадянського суспільства, зокрема волонтерського руху, благодійних організацій, неурядових (громадських організацій). Аналіз нормативно-правового поля, його трансформацій, у якому діють інститути громадянського суспільства. **Методологія дослідження.** У науковій статті використано головню аналітичний підхід для ретроспективного аналізу діяльності неурядових структур суспільства. Робота також базується на принципах системності, конкретно-історичного підходу, історико-системного методу. **Наукова новизна: аналіз** становлення громадянського суспільства крізь призму викликів, які постали в контексті російсько-української війни 2014–2024 рр. **Висновки.** Після 2014 року українське громадянське суспільство, реагуючи на цивілізаційні виклики, загрозу для територіальної цілісності країни якісно посилює свої впливи, допомагає у підтримці обороноздатності країни. Громадянські інституції стали рушійною силою у процесах налагодження взаємодії між владою та громадянами. Надають різносторонню підтримку (допомога у вимушеному переїзді з окупованих населених пунктів, подальша опіка над внутрішньо переміщеними особами, юридичні консультації, психологічний супровід, матеріальні дотації, підтримка тих громад, які залишилися у прифронтових територіях, окупованих та деокупованих регіонах), відіграють суттєву роль у протидії дезінформації, фіксуванні злочинів Російської Федерації, відновленні житлового фонду. Структури громадянського суспільства користуються великою довірою серед населення, іноземних фондів, відтак завдяки їм вдається акумулювати значну кількість коштів із пожертв для забезпечення як масштабних, так і точкових запитів від ЗСУ, добровольчих загонів.

Актуалізація низового громадського рівня під час повномасштабного вторгнення засвідчило, що українське громадянське суспільство здатне швидко реагувати на кризи. Натомість суттєвим викликом для подальшої ефективної роботи цих структур є проблема кооперації між організаціями та фондами, ефективний розподіл фінансових ресурсів, підтримка сталого рівня діяльності.

Ключові слова: громадянське суспільство, нормативно-правовий акт, закон, волонтерський рух, благодійна організація, громадська організація, визнання, легітимність.

The Problem Statement. A civil society is a complex concept that outlines the sphere of interaction of “self-operating” and social institutions separated from the state. It is also a structure of voluntary organizations of citizens who exercise their rights and interests in the public sphere. The Ukrainian sociologist Viktor Stepanenko, having reviewed the English-language historiography, which focuses on methodological approaches of defining a civil society concept, summarized that in democratic governance, a civil society acts in a similar way as the trade union, i.e. it functions in a political and cultural sphere (Stepanenko, 2015, pp. 17–19).

The American sociologist Jeffrey Alexander, rethinking the sociological thought of previous eras, offers a new theory of a civil society, which he refers to as the “civic sphere” (Friedland, 2007, p. 604). J. Alexander suggested a new approach to the interpretation of a civil

society as an independent “sphere, a world of values and institutions, which simultaneously forms the ability for a social criticism and democratic integration”. In its existence this sphere relies on the principle of solidarity and respect for others (Alexander, 2006, p. 4). Sharing J. Alexander’s view on the concept of a civil society as an “independent space of a social action and interaction” and the important role of solidarity in the formation of its institutions, one of its most important components is volunteering (Pankova, Kasperovych, & Ischenko, 2016a, p. 26). Also, the organizations of a civil society are non-governmental (non-state), charitable foundations and organizations, public associations and movements that arose on the basis of self-organization and aim at solving a certain social, economic, political, ecological, cultural problem (Stepanenko, 2015, pp. 40–41; Kravchenko & Nikitiuk, 2021, p. 6).

The Review of Recent Researches and Publications. In a historical and sociological perspective a civil society formation was studied by a number of the Ukrainian researchers, among them there should be mentioned the publications by Antonina Kolodiy (Kolodij, 2002), Victor Stepanenko (Stepanenko, 2015), Mykola Shulha (Shulha, 2014), Yuriy Shaihorodskiy (Shajhorodskij, 2021, pp. 332–367). The development of a volunteer movement and its priority areas was researched by Viacheslav Holub (Holub, 2016), Oksana Pankova, Oleksandr Kasperovych, Oleksandr Ischenko (Pankova, Kasperovych & Ischenko, 2016b). A holistic image of a volunteer movement has been reconstructed in the collective research authored by the scholars of I. Krypiakevych Institute of Ukrainian Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (Arkusha, Lytvyn, Bondar, Lukachuk & Khlypavka, 2018). The cooperation of civil society organizations, state defense and security bodies was studied by Liudmyla Kravchenko, Tymofiy Nikitiuk (Kravchenko & Nikitiuk, 2021), Viktor Lehkodukh (Lehkodukh, 2023). Analytical sociological surveys, such as those carried out by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (Sliusarevskiy, 2015), the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, complement the research significantly (Hromadianske suspilstvo Ukrainy, 2023). Ukrainian scientists compiled a bibliographic index of works on the Russian-Ukrainian war (Levchenko, 2022), analyzed some works of historians (Ilnytskiy, Starka & Haliv, 2022; Haliv & Sviontyk, 2023; Telvak & Ilnytskiy, 2023).

The purpose of the research is the study of a of civil society development under the conditions of the Russo-Ukrainian war, the analysis of a legal support of state policy in the field of the civil society organizations development.

The Results of the Research. In 2014 the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation and Russian aggression in the East of Ukraine became a geopolitical challenge and the cause of disorientation processes in the Ukrainian society. At that time, an active part of the society united and created a network of public organizations that helped solve urgent problems related to the supply of a medical aid, food, and equipment to the military in Eastern Ukraine and aid to the civilian population that suffered due to the war. Since 2014 a quantitative growth of a volunteer movement in Ukraine has been confirmed by the international studies. In particular, according to the rating of the annual study of charity in the world, i.e. World Giving Index (conducted by Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)) in 2010, Ukraine ranked the 150th, in 2014 – 103rd, and in 2015 – the 89th place (Bakovetska, 2020, p. 37).

In Ukraine one of the forms of manifestations of a civil society has become the volunteer movement. In Ukraine, the concept of volunteering is regulated by the Law of Ukraine “On Volunteering” of 2011. According to this law, it is “a voluntary, socially oriented, non-profit activity carried out through the provision of volunteer activities” (Zakon Ukrainy, 2011). This

law provided for the activities of volunteers only in the socio-cultural sphere and on the basis of “voluntariness, selflessness, social orientation, non-profitability” (Yatsiuk, 2023, p. 102).

After 2014, the activity of volunteer initiatives was aimed at a military and civilian support of fighters and residents in the war zone in Eastern Ukraine. Therefore, a regulatory and legal design of this activity was also updated. At the end of October of 2014, the Ministry for Finance of Ukraine issued order No. 1089 “On Approval of the Procedure for Forming and Maintaining the Register of Volunteers of Anti-terrorist Operation”, in accordance with the Law of Ukraine dated September 2, 2014 “On Amendments to the Tax Code of Ukraine on Certain Issues of Taxation of Charitable Aid”, supplemented with the final provisions of the Law “On Charitable Activities and Charitable Organizations” No. 5073-VI dated 07/05/2012. The State Fiscal Service (SFS) is obliged to create and introduce changes to the Register in an electronic form, publish these data every December on the official website.

At the legislative level, it is also provided for the insurance of people for the time of performing volunteer work, in particular according to the Federal Law “On Insurance” No. 85/96 of the Republic of Belarus dated 07.03.1996. The procedure and conditions of payments were supplemented by Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 604 of 19.08.2015 on “Some issues of payment of one-time cash assistance in case of death or disability of a volunteer in the area of an anti-terrorist operation, implementation of measures to ensure national security and defense, repelling and deterring armed aggression of the Russian Federation in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, hostilities and armed conflict” (Bakovetska, 2020, p. 38).

Since 2015, the legislator has been supplementing the Law “On Volunteering” actively. The areas of a volunteer activity have been expanded, in particular, it is provided that it can be carried out in the area of the anti-terrorist operation. Organizations and institutions that use the work of volunteers are allowed to insure their life and health during volunteering in accordance with the Law of Ukraine “On Insurance”. In the following years, minor changes were also made to the law on the activities of volunteers, but a comprehensive programme for promoting volunteer activities, financial support by the state, etc. was not adopted (Lypytchuk, 2022, pp. 184–185).

In February of 2022, after the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation, the Verkhovna Rada adopted amendments to the Law “On Volunteering” regarding support for volunteering on August 15, 2022. The amendments define additional areas of activity for volunteers to overcome the consequences of armed Russian aggression (“that or another country”), a post-war reconstruction and development of the country. It was determined that the Central executive authorities, together with non-profit organizations and institutions, develop programmes to promote the development of volunteerism, as well as support the civil society institutions (Zakon Ukrainy, 2022).

According to Taras Horbachevskiy’s calculations, the first significant surge in the activity of volunteer organizations took place in 2015, when more than 250 volunteer initiatives were active in Ukraine, which aimed their activities at solving the challenges caused by the Russian aggression in 2014. The rallying of public activists and organizations usually took place in regional centres and on the basis of professional, public, educational associations (Horbachevskiy, 2019, pp. 125–126).

The researchers of the volunteer movement development in Ukraine highlight its key directions, in particular, in 2014 and 2015, a massive aid was provided to the Ukrainian army, wounded fighters and prisoners from the ATO zone, families of fighters – participants

of the ATO, families of internally relocated people, civilians who remained on the territory of the ATO (Pankova, Kasperovych & Ischenko, 2016a, pp. 29–30). Among a number of all-Ukrainian volunteer organizations that help the military, the following ones should be highlighted: “Army SOS, Charitable Fund for Army Assistance “Return Alive”, Wings of the Phoenix, Support the Army of Ukraine, Volunteers without Borders”. Among the organizations that help the military, we should also single out organizations that help individual units of the Armed Forces, volunteer associations, doctors, and people from certain regions. Instead, they supported relocated people, provided support in various fields to the families of ATO soldiers, the Coordination Centre of the City of Kyiv, DemAlliance Aid, the Volunteer Association “Everybody Can Help”, the Office Hundred of Aid to the Ukrainian Army, the Centre for Aid to Forced Migrants, the Charitable Foundation “Heart”, Logistics Headquarters, Your Support (Horbachevskyi, 2019, pp. 126–128).

On June 18, 2015, in order to coordinate the work of charitable and volunteer organizations, the Ministry for Social Policy issued the Order “On the Approval of the Regulation on the Council for the Coordination of Work on Provision of Volunteer and Charitable Assistance at the Ministry for Social Policy of Ukraine” (Polozhennia, 2015). The Coordination Council was granted the status of a permanent advisory body of the Ministry for Social Policy. The purpose of its activity is to establish cooperation between state authorities, volunteer and charitable organizations. The Minister for Social Policy, who approves its composition, was appointed Chairman of the Council (Informatsijna dovidka, 2016). At the local level, i.e. in the regions of Ukraine, following the recommendation of the Ministry for Social Policy, such advisory institutions were also created under the regional councils. Coordination councils with the support of local executive bodies and public organizations, volunteer councils, public councils under the State Administration, centres for assistance to the ATO participants, other advisory bodies (Informatsijna dovidka, 2016).

Since 2014, anti-disinformation projects have played an important role among public initiatives, including StopFake, InformNapalm, and Ukraine Crisis Media Center, Euromaidan Press, UkraineWorld, VoxUkraine (the project VoxCheck), Regional Press Development Institute, Information Forces of Ukraine, Media Detector, Ukraine-2050. The platforms check and refute distorted information, mainly the Russian disinformation, they present a pro-Ukrainian view on the situation in Ukraine, mainly the events of the Russo-Ukrainian war in English and other foreign languages (Lozovyi, 2023, p. 369).

Since 2014 a comprehensive approach to the study of various aspects of Russia’s hybrid war against Ukraine has been represented by the “Prometheus” Security Environment Centre. Founded in December of 2015, the analytical centre conducts research and investigations using open source methods (Prometej, 2023). At the beginning of their activities, Prometheus experts wrote a guidebook for journalists, diplomats, and public activists studying Russia’s occupation of the Crimean Peninsula – “The Crimea behind the Curtain. Guide to the Occupation Zone” (Krym za zavisoiu, 2019). The next guide is “Donbas is on Fire”. “Guide to the Occupation Zone” was prepared on the basis of expert consultations and interviews, materials of the International volunteer intelligence community InformNapalm. The publication records and systematizes the evidence of the participation of the Russian Federation in the war in Donbas, presents a comprehensive history of this conflict. These editions were written in Ukrainian, Russian, English, French and German. The guidebooks were published with the support of the Canadian Foundation for the Support of Local Initiatives and the InformNapalm International Volunteer Community (Donbas v ohni, 2017).

A further development of “Prometheus” related to the preparation of analytical materials that prove the fact of the Russian presence in Donbas, the involvement of the Russian military in the combat zone (Dokazy). In 2020, the centre signed a Memorandum of Cooperation to create an internet portal about the course and consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The Web portal “Virtual Museum of Russian Aggression” provides verified information about the crimes of the Russian Federation from 2014 with the beginning of armed aggression and continues to post verified data about the full-scale invasion of 2022. This online resource was published with the support of the International Renaissance Foundation. Co-creators of the resources were the state authorities, the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, the Representatives of the President in the Autonomous Republic of the Crimea, the Office of the Prosecutor General. The Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, the Crimean Human Rights Protection Group, the Centre for Global Studies “Strategy XXI” and the others were also involved in the activity (Virtualnyj muzej rosijskoi ahresii, 2023).

Another important example of cooperation between the public and the military is the “Peacemaker” portal. The initiative was founded in 2015 by a group of researchers and specialists who collected and published on an online platform personal data of people who committed and are committing crimes against Ukraine. Employees of the centre also record, store data, and further investigate crimes of the Russian Federation (Lehkodukh, 2023, p. 61).

A growing role of a civil society, its effectiveness in the implementation of reforms, a comprehensive volunteer assistance to the military and civilians under the conditions of the beginning of the Russian Federation aggression testifies to the development of a regulatory and legal sphere of interaction between the public sector and the state. An important step in the development of cooperation between the state authorities and civil society institutions was the adoption of the Decree of the President of Ukraine on February 26, 2016 “On Promoting the Development of a Civil Society in Ukraine”. On the basis of this law, the “National strategy for Promoting the Development of a Civil Society in Ukraine for 2016 – 2020” was approved for the first time (Liakh, 2021). In the adopted strategy, it was emphasized that the purpose of this document is to create “favourable conditions for the development of a civil society, establishing an effective interaction of the public with state authorities, local self-government bodies on the basis of partnership” (Ukaz Prezydenta Ukrainy, 2016).

The main results of the “Civil Society Development Strategy” can be considered to be the registration procedure simplification of non-profit organizations, reduction of terms for their registration; implementation of the electronic procedure for registration of public associations, the functioning improvement of public councils activity mechanism at executive authorities, maintaining the Concept of Civic Education Development, developing a digital space for communication between executive authorities and the public – “VzayemoDiia” (“Interaction”) (Kravchenko & Nikitiuk, 2021a, p. 12). “VzayemoDiia” is an online platform that is part of the “Open Government Partnership” programme, in which the Ministry for Digital Transformation of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the EGAP Programme implemented by the Eastern Europe Foundation with the support of Switzerland, the National Democratic Institute, the UN Development Programme Project “Civil Society for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights in Ukraine”, the Council of Europe Project “Strengthening Public Participation in the Democratic Decision-Making Process in Ukraine” (VzaiemoDiia, 2023).

In 2020, the Government completed the implementation programme of the “Civil Society Development Strategy for the Period of 2016 – 2020”. Maxym Latsiba, the head of the civil

society development programme of the Ukrainian Independent Centre for Political Research (UNCPD) and a member of the working group on the creation of a new strategy for promoting the development of a civil society, summing up the results of the implementation of the Strategy, claimed that its postulates were only 50% fulfilled. One of the main achievements of the Strategy for the period of 2016 – 2020 in the field of interaction with the armed forces, the expert called the introduction of a transparent competition for veteran projects, their financing; implementation of a competition for the organization of people with disabilities, improvement of the funds distribution mechanisms for their activities (Yehorova, 2020).

Instead, the State Secretary of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Oleksandr Yarema, concluded on this occasion that in general 60% of the assigned tasks had been completed, approximately 40% were still in the process of implementation. Some experts called the main problem of implementing the Strategy – a low level of involvement of ministries and regional administrations. O. Yarema, responding to these critical remarks, claimed that misunderstandings arise due to inflated expectations from the cooperation of authorities and the civil sector. In practice, in his opinion, obstacles arose due to complex procedures of intersectoral interaction “coordinating and approving action plans” (Kryvosheiev & Yehorova, 2021).

On June 16, 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted the following “National Strategy for Promoting the Development of a Civil Society in Ukraine for 2021 – 2026”. The key strategic directions coincide with the developments in the previous document, only the tasks and expected results are substantiated more meaningfully. Therefore, the strategic directions of the Strategy for 2021 – 2026 are as follows: a further development of the public participation procedure in the creation and implementation of state policy at all levels of government; creation of conditions for institutional development of a civil society; supporting and strengthening the participation of civil society institutions in the socio-economic life of the country; establishment of better conditions for intersectoral cooperation (Kravchenko & Nikitiuk, 2021a, p. 12; Ukaz Prezydenta Ukrainy, 2021).

During the period of 2016 – 2020, there were positive trends regarding the increase in the number of civil society institutions, according to the data of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, the number of “legal entities by organizational and legal forms of management increased: public organizations – by 22,149, public unions – by 1,122, charitable organizations – by 4428, self-organization bodies of the population – by 234” (Natsionalna stratehiia, 2021).

Under the conditions of the Russian aggression since 2014, civil society organizations that interact with the Armed Forces of Ukraine have been playing an important role. Among the consultative and advisory bodies, the Public Council under the Ministry for Defense of Ukraine should be singled out (Kravchenko & Nikitiuk, 2021b, pp. 19–20) (in 2023 reformatted into the Public Anti-Corruption Council under the Ministry for Defense of Ukraine) (Hromadska antykoruptsiyna rada, 2023), Project Office of Reforms (liquidated in 2020, the Directorate of Information Policy in the Field of Defense and Strategic Communications was created instead) (Dyrektorat informatsijnoi polityky, 2020).

The main task of the Public Council under the Ministry for Defense of Ukraine, which was established in 2004, was to coordinate activities and advise public organizations and the Ministry for Defense of Ukraine. The Public Council includes representatives of various public organizations, unions and formations (27 people in total). In addition to the function of informing, an important task of the Public Council is “supervision and monitoring of the body’s provision of transparency and openness of its activities, compliance with the law” (Kravchenko & Nikitiuk, 2021b, pp. 19–20).

The reform project office was founded in 2015 as “a consultative and advisory body to ensure the coordination of changes” in the Ministry for Defense. This body was founded by volunteers from the business environment. The main achievements of the Reform Project Office can be considered the introduction of electronic procurement (Prozorro system) in the Ministry for Defense, the reform of the food system, defense procurement system, etc. (Kravchenko & Nikitiuk, 2021b, p. 22).

Civil society organizations played an important role in countering the Russian aggression in 2014. Their activity is no less significant under the conditions of a full-scale attack by Russia in 2022. The results of the sociological study “Civil Society in Ukraine under Conditions of War – 2022” demonstrated a significant increase in the number of public and charitable organizations. In 2022, 2,760 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 6,367 new charitable organizations (BOs) were registered (in 2021, there were only 830 such newly created charitable organizations). In 2022, the largest number of new HOs, BOs were registered in Kyiv, Kyiv region, Lviv, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Odesa regions (Hromadianske suspilstvo Ukrainy, 2023).

The first place among charitable and public associations, in particular in the field of media recognition, belongs to the BF “Povernys Zhyvym”, UNITED 24, HO “Community Affairs”, BF Serhiy Prytula, BF Poroshenko Foundation, BO “Caritas”. The largest funds United24, Return to Life and the Prytula fund received donations in the amount of UAH 33.96 billion (almost \$1 billion) from Ukrainians and foreigners (Hromadianske suspilstvo Ukrainy, 2023, p. 7).

The main priorities in the activities of HOs/BOs after 2022 remain the assistance of the Armed Forces and victims of war, in contrast, during previous years, the activity was focused on sports, culture, education and tourism (Hromadianske suspilstvo Ukrainy, 2023, p. 9). In countering Russia, not only charitable foundations and organizations, volunteer initiatives, but also the phenomenon of Ukrainian territorial defense play an important role (Lehkodukh, 2023, p. 58).

The Conclusions. Consequently, the Ukrainian civil society accelerated its development after 2014. Responding to the need to mobilize forces under the conditions of a hybrid Russo-Ukrainian war, the multi-vector assistance of volunteer initiatives and non-governmental organizations is directed from increasing defense capabilities to helping internally relocated people directly affected by the war, restoring and reconstructing destroyed. The full-scale Russian invasion mobilized the organizations of a civil society (including at the grassroots level), and strengthened their cooperation. However, there is a problem of a sustainable level of involvement of citizens in the public sector activities, funding, integrity and openness.

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