DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN TIMES OF WAR: THE CASE OF UKRAINE

Alina Iovcheva,
e-mail: alina.iovcheva@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3065-748X
Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University,
Ukraine, 54003, Mykolaiv, 68 Desantnykiv St., 10

David Reichardt,
e-mail: dr0608@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1579-1760
Comenius University in Bratislava,
Slovakia, 81499, Bratislava, Šafárikovo námestie, 6

Abstract
The article examines the peculiarities of value transformations and implementation of democratic values in the context of war. In particular, the focus is on the process of value transformation of Ukrainian society during the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian war. The article examines key aspects of this process, including the impact of the war on the level of national self-identification and patriotism. Special attention is paid to the impact of military conflicts on public attitudes towards the protection of human rights, freedom, the rule of law and other basic democratic values.

The purpose of the article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of sociological surveys, analytical reports, expert interviews and other sources that reflect the change in the value paradigm of Ukrainian society and to identify the peculiarities of the introduction of democratic value orientations during the period of hostilities. Particular attention is paid to a comparative analysis of the situation before and after the outbreak of hostilities.

In general, the article argues that the transformation of value orientations in Ukrainian society during the war was dynamic and very abrupt, caused by the shock effect. The author notes that this transition gravitates towards the value paradigm of the democratic model. However, in order to strengthen and scale this effect, a comprehensive and systematic work of all actors of value socialisation is needed, including Ukrainian politicians, media, civil society and educational institutions.

This article is important for understanding the impact of the war on the democratisation of Ukrainian society and provides practical recommendations for promoting the implementation of democratic values in the context of the conflict.

Keywords: democratic values, democratic transition, Ukraine, Ukrainian Society, Russian-Ukrainian War
ДЕМОКРАТИЧНІ ЦІННОСТІ В УМОВАХ ВІЙНИ: ПРИКЛАД УКРАЇНИ

Аліна Іовчева, e-mail: alina.iovcheva@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3065-748X
Чорноморський національний університет імені Петра Могили, Україна, 54003, м. Миколаїв, 68 Десантників, 10

Девід Райхардт, e-mail: dr0608@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1579-1760
Університет Коменського в Братиславі, Словаччина, 81499, м. Братислава, площа Шафарика 6

Анотація
У статті досліджуються особливості ціннісних трансформацій та імплементації демократичних цінностей в умовах війни. Зокрема, у фокусі розгляду – процес ціннісного транзиту українського суспільства під час російсько-української війни. У статті розглядаються ключові аспекти цього процесу, включаючи вплив війни на рівень національної самоідентифікації та патріотичності. Окрема увага приділяється впливу воєнних конфліктів на суспільне ставлення до захисту прав людини, свободи, верховенства права та інших базових демократичних цінностей.

Метою статті є комплексний аналіз соціологічних досліджень, аналітичних звітів, інтерв’ю експертів та інших джерел, які транслюють зміну ціннісної парадигми українського суспільства та виявлення особливостей запровадження демократичних ціннісних орієнтирів в період воєнних дій. Акцент робиться на порівняльному аналізі ситуації до та після початку військових дій.

Загалом у статті стверджується, що трансформація ціннісних орієнтацій в українському суспільстві в умовах війни мала динамічний, дуже різкий характер, спричинений шоковим ефектом. Автори зазначають, що цей перехід вочевидь тяжіє до ціннісної парадигми демократичної моделі. Однак, для посилення і масштабування цього ефекту необхідна комплексна і системна робота всіх акторів ціннісної соціалізації, включаючи український політикум, ЗМІ, громадянське суспільство та освітні інституції. Це дослідження має важливе значення для розуміння впливу війни на процеси демократизації українського суспільства та надає практичні рекомендації щодо сприяння імплементації демократичних цінностей в умовах конфлікту.

Ключові слова: демократичні цінності, демократичний транзит, Україна, українське суспільство, російсько-українська війна

Problem statement. Values determine the outcome of the creation or reform of political institutions, forming the content, logic and specifics of their functioning. This means that a qualitative democratic transition of any state is impossible if only formal institutions of political power are built, while the value component of its democratic character is completely ignored.

Ukraine’s post-Soviet heritage and its place on the geopolitical map of Europe, from the very beginning of its independence, determined the duality of its value system. Since 1991, Ukraine has found itself in a certain value vacuum, where the old value regulators have lost their relevance, and new (democratic) ones have not yet taken hold in the public consciousness. Active value transformations in Ukrainian society began in the early
twenty-first century. The revolutions of 2004 and 2014 played a significant role in this process. In particular, the Revolution of Dignity, intensified by the armed conflict in the East of the country, actualized the accelerated value transformation of Ukrainian society. However, according to sociological research, on the eve of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, traditional survival values still prevailed in Ukrainian society. Democratic and liberal values were implemented rather inconsistently. As a result, they were unstable and poorly transmitted by Ukrainian society. The population remained highly loyal to corruption and the patronage-client system of public administration, which was part of the usual logic of life in the post-Soviet, coordinates of values. On February 24, 2022, Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, which caused a crisis in the security concept of the entire European region and the world as a whole. It also produced a shock effect and quickly brought to the forefront of Ukrainian society the process of rethinking the values of freedom, independence, security and the state. According to sociological studies, it was with the outbreak of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war that the value paradigm of Ukrainian society acquired new qualitative democratic features.

**Analysis of research and publications.** A fairly large number of foreign and domestic researchers have analyzed value transformations during the war. These are mainly studies conducted in the field of philosophy and the sociology of war. Among such works are those of Alexander Moseley (Moseley, 2002), Gerald M. Mara (2019), Zachary Davis (Davis, 2012), Ella Daniel, Keren Fortuna, Sophia K. Thrun, Shaylee Cioban, Ariel Knafo (Daniel et al., 2013), J. Christopher Cohrs, Barbara Moschner, Jurgen Maes, Sven Kielmann (Cohrs et al., 2005), John Mueller (Mueller, 1991), Jeffrey C. Alexander (Alexander, 2006), George L. Mosse (Mosse, 1990), and others.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, studies of various aspects of the value orientations of Ukrainian society in national science have become more relevant. For example, a number of authors (Anatoliy Yermolenko (Yermolenko, 2015), Olena Shahova (Shahova, 2022), Natalia Kostenko (Kostenko, 2002), Mykhailo Cherenkov (Cherenkov, 2019), Yevhen Golovakha, Sergey Makeiev (Golovakha & Makeiev, 2022) examine the formation of value orientations in Ukrainian society during the war.

Attention should also be paid to interdisciplinary studies that are devoted to the study of topics related to the topic of this study. Thus, it is necessary to mention the works of Ukrainian authors Valentyna Goshovska, Iurii Kisiel, Lyudmyla Lukina, Olga Gorulko, Ihor Nehulevskyi (Goshovska et al., 2022), Alina Iovcheva (Iovcheva, 2023), Olena Sakhan, Natalia Shevchuk (Sakhan & Shevchuk, 2018), who focus on the role of value orientations in the process of building a democratic transition and sustainable development in Ukrainian society. Ihor Todorov and Todorova Natalia (Todorov & Todorova, 2019) in their work define the role of democratic values in the process of Ukraine’s confrontation with the foreign policy aggression of the Russian Federation.

Summarizing the state of scientific development of the research topic in foreign and domestic scientific thought, it is necessary to state that there is considerable research interest and the availability of thorough and original works in this area. At the same time, given the substantive potential of these studies, it should be noted that not all aspects of the value transition and the introduction of democratic values in Ukrainian society have been fully explored. There is virtually no meaningful analysis of a broad source base on the subject of the study, as well as no comparative analysis of value ideals in different periods of independent Ukraine’s existence.

**Primary purpose.** This study aims to analyse value transformations and identify the peculiarities of the introduction of the liberal-democratic value paradigm in Ukrainian society during the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian war. The study will be based on a wide range of sources, including sociological surveys, analytical reports, materials from roundtables and public discussions, speeches by diplomatic officials, interviews and comments by experts, etc.

**State of scientific development.** Ukraine’s independence was inextricably linked to the process of rethinking social values and guidelines. However, a number of factors determined the specifics of this process. Among them:
The post-socialist value paradigm, which was imposed through aggressive propaganda for almost 70 years. Despite losing its relevance, it remained the only acceptable one for the majority of the population during the first decade of independent Ukraine. With the post-communist transformation, a value transformation gradually took place. Nevertheless, as late as 2017, 30% of the Ukrainian population was nostalgic for the Soviet era (Sudakova & Rasulova, 2018). Even now, in some places in Ukrainian society, one can find Soviet-era values defined by paternalism, conformism, irrational consumption, etc.;

Lack of a comprehensive systemic state policy on value reorientation of the population. The transformation of value principles and norms was mostly declarative, which resulted in the imitation of the process of value transformation and the reproduction of the societal narratives that prevailed in the Soviet era;

Unformed civil society that did not fulfil its function of value socialisation. The functional single-vector nature of society did not allow the relatively large number of Ukrainian NGOs to cover a large segment of society, which led to the low engagement of citizens in the public sector – about 5%. Gradually, this figure increased, but it did not exceed 25%, which is critically low;

Absolute prevalence of materialistic values, the main ideological basis of which is the desire for material goods. These types of values are typical of post-socialist countries with underdeveloped economies. Post-Soviet institutions functioned in such a way as to reproduce survival values (or, in other words, materialistic values). Such values allowed people to adapt in the face of limited resources and daily challenges (Kyselyova & Ukrainets, 2017). At the same time, materialistic values are characterised by a lack of norms and principles that profess and regulate social interaction on the basis of law, democracy, freedom of speech, transparency, equal opportunities for all citizens, etc. It should be noted that even today, in Ukrainian society, the values of personal well-being prevail over post-materialistic values.

Ukraine’s foreign policy dual vector, which was on the verge of a value confrontation between the democratic and liberal concept of Western Europe and the traditionalist value paradigm of the Russian Federation. According to historian T. Snyder, for at least ten years, Russian politicians have been waging an ideological war with the West in general and Europe in particular (Snyder, Plokhii & Blom, 2022). Ukraine’s geopolitical position did not allow it to be indifferent to this process. This dualism was manifested, first of all, in the public consciousness of Ukrainians, who, while prioritising democratic orientations, professed traditional values. It was these traditional values, which are hybrid in nature, which led to many manipulations in Ukrainian society during the full-scale invasion. Today, analysing the deeper meanings of the Russian-Ukrainian war, we can say with certainty that it is the clash of value concepts that has determined an important component of this conflict.

When considering the value transformation of Ukrainian society, it is important to note that one of the key factors that accelerated it was the foreign policy threat that evolved into an open Russian-Ukrainian war in 2014. The fact that values are transformed during war is quite common and has been extensively studied by foreign authors. Thus, the American sociologist Jeffrey C. Alexander, who conducted case studies of the First World War, the Vietnam War, etc., determined how war affects the civil sphere and shapes social values in different contexts. He noted that in times of war, such value norms as solidarity and unity (war often generates a sense of unity and solidarity among members of society); patriotism and national identity (national symbols, rituals and stories may become more meaningful); humanitarian values (protection of human rights and other humanitarian norms becomes relevant in response to challenges and crises caused by war); social activism and civic engagement (emergence of movements or organisations advocating peace, human rights or other values, increased political engagement of society); moral reflection (active public debate on the ethics of war); thirst for justice (increased demands
for accountability for actions committed during the war, such as war crimes, abuse of power, etc.). At the same time, the author identifies the key role of the media as an actor of value socialisation, noting that it is the media that influences how values are constructed and understood in times of war (Alexander, 2006).

Another conceptual researcher in the field of value transformations is George Lachmann Mosse, who is known for his work on the cultural and social history of war, in which he highlighted the profound transformations in social norms, values and cultural dynamics caused by war. G.L. Mosse argued that wars can lead to the development of a special warrior culture in a society, which actualises attributes such as bravery, honour and self-sacrifice. In addition, among the changes caused by war, the author noted redefinition of gender roles (as women often take on new roles and responsibilities in war); development of nationalism and patriotism (perception of one's national identity and one's duties to the nation); experience of trauma and resilience (the trauma of war leads to a reassessment of social values and moral resilience); mobilisation of the masses (mobilisation of large segments of the population and changes in social hierarchies and norms as people from different walks of life unite in war) (Mosse, 1990).

There is no doubt that any military conflict transforms social norms and values. As a rule, this transformation is very dynamic, as it is caused by the shock and threat of war. As one can see, among the changes in social norms and value narratives during war, one can find a number of fairly typical characteristics that are common to different military conflicts in different regions. However, it is important to note that the impact of war on social values can vary depending on cultural, historical and individual factors.

This study analyses the value transformations that took place in Ukrainian society during the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian war. The analysis will be based on data from sociological surveys, analytical reports, and speeches by diplomatic officials, materials from roundtables and public discussions, interviews and comments by experts, etc.

Since Ukraine is currently at war and, at the same time, declares a foreign policy strategy of European integration, it is important to consider value transformations in terms of national self-determination and attitudes towards the values that are the basis of the European community, namely security, freedom, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

**National identity.** National self-determination is a key aspect of the formation and development of a conscious political nation, which, in turn, is the core of the national idea of any democratic state. The national self-identification of a society determines how an individual feels about belonging to a nation whose values and traditions he or she transmits and aligns with his or her own beliefs. It is through a formed national identity that cultural diversity is ensured, historical memory is preserved, civic participation is motivated, etc.

The entire history of the Ukrainian nation is a continuous struggle for national identity and self-determination. However, the issue of self-identification has been re-emerging in a new context since Ukraine gained independence. Despite the fact that the Soviet Union ceased to exist, the propaganda narratives of “one nation” and “one culture” continued to function in Ukrainian society for a long time. What was dangerous was the fact that the slogans of “brotherly unity”, which were used by communist and pro-Russian political forces that retained their positions in power, were becoming ingrained in the content of Ukrainian identity. Thus, in 1998, 55.9% of Ukrainians expressed their readiness to perceive Russians as their closest relatives (Panina, 2004). The process of cultural separation intensified with the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2014. Already in 2017, about a quarter (27%) of respondents agreed with the statement “Ukrainians and Russians have always been and remain fraternal peoples”, while in 2023, only 4% shared this (Razumkov Center, August 21, 2023). As a result of the war, the image of a “big brother” in relation to the Russian Federation in Ukrainian society was replaced by the image of an “enemy”. For example, sociological data from a 2022 survey showed that 100% of Ukrainians consider Russia to be an enemy (Ukrainian sociologists discussed how
Ukrainians change..., October 22, 2023). Qualitatively positive changes were also observed in the process of national self-identification. Already in 2017, about 90% of respondents self-identified as Ukrainians, compared to 1992, when this figure was 69%. With the beginning of the full-scale invasion, this percentage reached 96% (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Dynamics of national identity of Ukrainians in 1992-2023 (Łukanska, 2021; Sociological monitoring “Ukrainian society”, 2023)

Analysing the data of sociological surveys, we can see that they correspond to the classical theories of socio-cultural changes during military conflicts. Indeed, the first thing that researchers identify when analysing value transformations during war is the activation of a sense of national belonging and patriotism (Alexander, 2006; Mosse, 1990).

**Freedom or Security?** The dichotomous pair “freedom – security” is a fairly common subject of research in psychology and sociology. For example, the famous sociologist and philosopher Sigmund Bauman considered the topic of freedom and security to be key in today’s globalised society and stressed the need for a deliberate approach to ensuring them. He noted that individuality increases freedom, but does so at the expense of security. However, in the absence of security, citizens are deprived of trust, without which freedom cannot be realised. On the other hand, in a society facing multiple threats, there is a risk of increased control and restriction of citizens’ freedom in the name of security. Therefore, the pursuit of security may lead to the loss of personal freedom, as the authorities may take various measures to ensure security, even if this restricts the rights of citizens (Bauman, 2001; 2005).

Given the choice between freedom and security, Ukrainians are more likely to choose security. The 2022 and 2023 polls confirmed this fact (38.8% and 54.5% respectively) (Figure 2). These figures are quite understandable in the context of war and constant threats to ordinary Ukrainians. However, it is interesting to note that before the full-scale invasion, the percentage of Ukrainians who chose security was more than 65% (Reznik, June 12, 2023). However, after the outbreak of full-scale war in February 2022, the percentage difference between security and freedom choice has decreased. On the one hand, this can be explained by the fact that is due to a smaller percentage of those who had not yet decided.

On the other side, the focus on freedom remains consistently important in Ukrainian society. According to a survey conducted by the Sociological Group “Rating” in May 2022, more than 90% of respondents identified freedom as the core value of Ukrainians (More than 90% of Ukrainians consider freedom..., October 22, 2023). Such a high figure can be explained by the fact that in times of war, the concept of “freedom” in Ukrainian society is associated with the concept of “defiance”, which in turn determines the spirit of resistance against an external enemy.
Figure 2. Attitudes of Ukrainians towards security and freedom in 2017-2023
(Socio-political orientations of Ukrainian citizens (May 2023), June 21, 2023; Reznik, June 12, 2023)

Respect for human and civil rights. Respect for human and civil rights is a fundamental value that underpins a just, humane and democratic society. It is a principle that is important at both national and international levels and is reflected in many international legal acts and agreements.

Since the beginning of its independent history, Ukraine has declared itself a democratic state based on guarantees of human and civil rights. However, the democratic transition was accompanied by internal political and economic difficulties that affected the implementation of these guarantees. Thus, corruption, instability and social problems have created restrictions on the development of a full-fledged legal system and the implementation of human rights guarantees. The new Constitution of Ukraine, adopted in 1996, became the legal basis for the respect and protection of human and civil rights.

Sociological studies show that Ukrainians associate respect for human and civil rights with the rights of children (prohibition of physical and mental violence), women (protection from domestic violence, property discrimination and sexual harassment), people with disabilities, and LGBT minorities (Osadcha, June 1, 2022).

The key right for Ukrainians is the right to life (80%). Other important rights are the right to social security (59%), the right to work (53%), the right to liberty and security of person (55%), the right to a fair trial (54%), the right to education (52%), the right to housing (51%), etc. (Gorshenin Institute, 2017).

The analysis of opinion polls on values related to the observance of human and civil rights represents a shift from traditional narratives to pro-democratic ones. This is evidenced by a change in public opinion in favour of protecting the rights of LGBT minorities, the equal role of women in society, rejection of violence as a traditional method of raising children, and support for the rights of people with disabilities (Figure 3). It should be noted that the full-scale war has accelerated this transformation, as Russia, which is perceived by Ukrainian society as an unequivocal enemy, is an active defender and transmitter of the traditional value paradigm. Therefore, the desire to distance oneself from the enemy and form one’s own cultural model accelerates the value transit of Ukrainian society.
Rule of law and corruption. The rule of law as a value is an extremely important principle for building a just and democratic society. This norm declares equality before the law, limitation of power, protection of rights and freedoms, development of democracy, etc.

The implementation of the rule of law is inextricably linked to the phenomenon of corruption. Since the establishment of independent Ukraine, nepotism, bribery, cronyism and other forms of corrupt interaction have formed the basis of socio-political regulation. With the beginning of an active value transit in Ukrainian society (which dates back to the beginning of the 21st century and was associated with revolutionary protests), the issue of the rule of law and the fight against corruption has become more relevant.
It should be noted that Ukrainian society has always been aware of corruption as a problem and an obstacle to the development of the Ukrainian state (Figure 4). However, the underdeveloped civil society and the lack of effective mechanisms for combating corruption schemes did not allow for a full response to the existing problem.

Today, research shows that Ukrainians consider corruption to be the biggest obstacle to economic development – more so than the war (Ukrainians named corruption as the biggest fear..., June 14, 2023). This is because in times of war, the deterioration of economic and social conditions on the one hand, and the emergence of new forms of interaction on the other, usually provoke the emergence of new corruption networks. At the same time, during military conflicts, there is an increased sense of social justice, struggle for transparency in governance, etc. Accordingly, this can intensify public discontent with corrupt practices.

Conclusions. In the context of any military conflict, reassessment of important value orientations of society is an inevitable process. These transformations play an important role in shaping reactions to the war, affecting behavior and perceptions of important socio-political issues. On the one hand, the conflict is leading to the reorganization and consolidation of society in order to protect new norms and guidelines. On the other hand, value transformations, which are influenced by the traumatic effect of war, can create new challenges and conflicts in society. In general, the change in values during war reflects a complex process of adaptation and feedback of society to conflict circumstances.

The source base studied in this research confirms the fact that in the context of the war, Ukrainian society is in a state of value transit, which consists of:

-Raising the level of national identity cultural separation. In fact, an increase in patriotism and national identity is a typical reaction to military action in any society. However, what is special for Ukraine is the fact that due to the external threat and the outbreak of hostilities on the territory of Ukraine, there has been a sharp cultural separation of Ukrainians from the Russians. This process began in 2014 with the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war and, despite the fact that it was not widespread among Ukrainians, laid the groundwork for the destruction of propaganda narratives about the cultural closeness of the two nations. Already with the start of the full-scale invasion, cultural separation occurred almost at lightning speed and spread throughout Ukrainian society. Almost in one day, on February 24, 2022, the image of a “big brother” in the minds of Ukrainians was replaced by an unambiguous image of an “enemy” who, in times of war, poses a threat to the country’s territorial integrity and national security. The desire to broadcast this cultural and value difference from the enemy has led to Ukrainians actively demonstrating their national identity in Ukraine and abroad.

-Mainstreaming the value of security. This transformation is also logically justified and common among societies at war. However, an interesting aspect in the context of Ukrainian society is the fact that the beginning of the war in 2014 was marked by the priority of the value of freedom over security. Only with the start of the full-scale invasion, according to polls, this priority has been changed. However, the difference in percentages is not significant. This indicates that Ukrainian society has a high degree of freedom-loving and rebelliousness, which makes it possible to resist in the face of a disproportionate resource gap of the enemy.

-Mainstreaming tolerance and equality in the context of human and civil rights. This aspect can be explained by two reasons:

1) A high level of tolerance and social equality is a sign of the democratic value paradigm, which is the carrier of the European community. In contrast, we can talk about a traditional value concept, which is represented by Russia. The desire to take distance from the enemy and integrate into the European community is a catalyst for value transformation in Ukrainian society;

2) The perception of human rights, in any context, is an intrinsic value for Ukrainian society, which is striving to become open and democratically developed.
An acute rejection of violations of the rule of law. In particular, corruption. The war sharpens the sense of justice and intensifies the public’s position in the fight against injustice. Ukraine is no exception. The issue of corruption has always been perceived negatively by Ukrainian society. However, with the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Ukrainians, in addition to placing the responsibility for fighting corruption on the authorities, began to feel that they were also involved in this fight. The shift from passive condemnation to action is an important social effect of war.

In general, the peculiarity of the value transformation in Ukrainian society during the war has led to the strengthening of the democratic value paradigm. However, it is important to understand that any changes during military conflicts have a rapid shock effect, and, provided the hostilities end, this effect may fade away or even roll back. In order to mitigate this risk, it is necessary that all actors of value socialisation introduce (the state, media, civil society, and educational institutions) a comprehensive systemic strategy for the implementation of liberal values in Ukrainian society.

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