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POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS OF UKRAINIAN CITIZENS IN THE CONDITIONS OF THE RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

(SUMMARY)

The all-out Russian armed aggression against Ukraine that began on February 24, 2022, has fundamentally changed the situation in Ukraine and the world. Thousands of Ukrainians were killed, many fell victims to torture and inhuman treatment, millions left the country, saving their lives from the war, the aggressor forcibly deported from Ukraine thousands of adults and children.

The country sustained incredible ruination, lost a large part of its economic potential, infrastructure, including social and cultural, some territories became environmental disaster areas, others are still occupied by the enemy. In fact, we see an attempt of the Russian aggressor to exterminate a whole European nation – a phenomenon, hardly imaginable in the third millennium.

However, all the horrors and woes of war did not break the will of the Ukrainian people

to freedom and independence. The Ukrainian nation, Ukrainian citizens of all nationalities have demonstrated to the whole world their courage, invincibility, will to win, readiness to defend independence of their state, freedom and democracy – the values, usually termed European – at the expense of their lives.

The war has changed Ukraine. In the future, these changes will determine the situation in the country and its development. So, even now, while the war is on, it is important to know exactly what changes took place in the minds of Ukrainian citizens, what opportunities these changes open up, and what risks they carry.

These tasks were in the focus of Razumkov Centre's project «**Political and ideological orientations of Ukrainian citizens in the conditions of the Russian aggression**», implemented with support from Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Ukraine.

The goal of the project was to identify, on the basis of a comprehensive analytical survey (including public opinion¹ and expert² polls), the main changes in political, ideological and value-based orientations of Ukrainian citizens that took place under the influence of factors caused by the Russian armed aggression against Ukraine.

The project also involves study of the possible influence of said changes on the socio-political developments in Ukraine after the end of hostilities and lifting of the martial law, configuration of political actors after the restoration of political competition, as well as their political priorities during post-war socio-economic recovery and Ukraine's preparation for accession to the EU as a candidate country.

The full results of the project, including the data of the public opinion polls, are presented in the *National Security and Defence* magazine issue No. 3-4, 2023³. Below are the main conclusions of the policy paper and forecasts building on the survey results.

1. POLITICAL VALUES, POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS OF UKRAINIAN CITIZENS IN THE PERIOD OF THE RUSSIAN AGGRESSION (SEPTEMBER 2022): THE STATE AND TRENDS

The Russian military aggression brought about cohesion of society, caused by the need to fight an external enemy: it got a clear goal of society development and social action, where «victory» is the key term; Ukrainian society got a clear idea of the «friend or foe» and therefore, is well aware, what to do, and how.

Cohesion of society and clearly set public goals contributed to social optimism and confidence in the future. For instance, compared to 2021, there is a significant increase (from 40% to 65%) in the share of respondents who believe that in the future Ukraine will be a highly developed, democratic, influential European country. This opinion prevails most of all among the adherents of Ukraine's accession to the European Union.

The war situation caused the need for solidarity – with the fellow residents of the city, village, region, the whole country, even Europe and the world. Ukrainian citizens feel affiliation with their city (village), region and the country much stronger than the citizens of all the countries, with which they were compared⁴.

According to the survey results, the war in Ukraine did not lead to the growth of ethnic or religious intolerance (the trust in representatives of other ethnic groups and religions has not changed, compared to the «pre-war» level). Meanwhile, satisfaction of Ukrainian citizens with their life in wartime decreased.

Among social institutes, the greatest trust of Ukrainians is enjoyed by the Armed Forces, the President, humanitarian, charitable, women's and environmental organisations, the church, universities, state institutions, police.

Mistrust was most often reported with regard to political parties, courts, banks, trade unions, the Verkhovna Rada, big companies and elections, as a social institute.

Compared to 2020, trust in international unions and organisations increased (most of all – in the EU and NATO).

¹ Face-to-face interviews were held on September 22 - October 1, 2022, in Vinnytsia, Volyn, Dnipropetrovsk, Zhytomyr, Transcarpathian, Zaporizhia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Lviv, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Poltava, Rivne, Sumy, Ternopil, Kharkiv, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy, Chernihiv, Chernivtsi regions and Kyiv city (in Zaporizhia, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv regions – only in the territories controlled by the Ukrainian government and free of hostilities).

The poll was held in 112 populated localities (57 urban and 55 rural) with stratified multilevel sampling with random selection at the initial sampling stages and quota selection of respondents at the final stage (when respondents were selected on the basis of sex and age quotas). The total sample structure reproduces the demographic structure of the adult population of the territories, where the poll was held, as of the beginning of 2022 (by age, sex, settlement type). 2 021 respondents aged above 18 years were polled. The sample error (disregarding the design effect) does not exceed 2.3%. Meanwhile, additional systemic deviations of the sample may be caused by the effects of the Russian aggression, including forced evacuation of millions of citizens.

² The expert poll was conducted by the Razumkov Centre Sociological Service in September - October, 2022. 102 experts (political analysts, representatives of local self-government bodies, public organisations, political parties, journalists) were polled.

³ Reference link to the journal.

⁴ The results of this poll were compared with the results of polls held in Ukraine as part of the World Values Survey in 2011 and 2020, as well as the results of polls held within the framework of the 7th wave of the World Values Survey in Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, Russia, and Kazakhstan.

After the beginning of the Russian all-out aggression in Ukraine, the interest in politics increased substantially (from 35% to 56%), as did the share of citizens who believe that the political system in this country lets them influence the government policy.

More people actively participate in humanitarian and charitable organisations, self-assistance and mutual assistance groups. Participation in the volunteer movement and organisations that help the Ukrainian army is higher, compared to other public organisation (11% take an active part in both). Involvement of citizens in religious organisation also increased during the past decade.

After the beginning of the all-out Russo-Ukrainian war, the number of citizens who see democracy as the most desired type of the state system increased. In the past five years, people's assessment of the level of democracy in the country governance was improving.

Satisfaction of citizens with the work of the political system in Ukraine is medium, despite some increase, compared to 2020. Satisfaction of citizens with the work of the political system in Ukraine strongly correlates with the assessment of the democracy of the country governance, which proves the importance of democracy for Ukrainian citizens.

Compared to the previous years, the share of those who consider a democratic political system to be «very good» in Ukraine increased substantially (from 28% in 2020 to 54% in 2022). In the recent several years Ukrainians' support for a system with «a strong leader, not dependent on Parliament and elections» substantially declined, and it far yields to the support for a democratic system. At that same time, over 60% of citizens consider both systems to be good, apparently not noticing contradictions between them.

Due to the all-out war, the share of citizens who consider a system of military rule «rather good» or «very good» increased by more than 10% in Ukraine. However, the overwhelming majority (almost 70%) of Ukrainians even now considers such a system bad.

Furthermore, the overwhelming majority (almost 90%) of those who believe the system of military rule to be good considers the democratic system to be good, too. That is, the

«military rule» is mainly seen as a tool for the defence of democracy in the conditions of a military confrontation with the aggressor.

When facing the choice between freedom and equality, the overwhelming majority (71%) of those polled choose freedom. But choosing between freedom and security, Ukrainians (as well as the citizens of all other compared countries) more often choose security. However, the choice in favour of security now is much lower than in 2020 (even during an all-out war, when the importance of security has extremely grown in Ukraine).

Ukrainian citizens most often see equality as equal opportunities to reveal one's abilities and equality of all before the law.

By and large, one may notice a trend towards stronger support in Ukrainian society for liberal values and approaches in the social and economic domain in the recent decade. However, the influence of étatist and paternalist spirits remains strong (in some aspects, dominant). For instance, Ukrainians mainly stand for a larger share of state ownership in business and industry. Meanwhile, in the past decade the share of those who advocate a greater share of state ownership gradually decreases, while the number of adherents of a greater share of private ownership in business and industry increases, accordingly.

In the recent years the public opinion was dominated by the opinion that «it is better to live in a society where everything is regimented by the state, but there is no excessive social inequality». However, the latest poll has demonstrated a decrease in this indicator. The share of those who think so now does not statistically differ from the share of those who stick to the alternative viewpoint: «it is better to live in a society of individual freedom, where everyone is responsible and cares for himself».

Substantial differences in socio-economic issues persist among age groups: the younger the people are, the more market-oriented and liberal their stand is.

Choosing between the two models of society development — European and Russian, 70% preferred the European model, only 0.5% — Russian. The share of adherents of the Russian model is extremely low in all regions and all social and demographic groups.

Readiness to defend the country was reported by the overwhelming majority of citizens, the majority of residents in all regions and the majority of representatives of all social and demographic groups.

2. PROSPECTS OF RESTORATION OF A COMPETITIVE POLITICAL PROCESS AFTER THE WAR: PUBLIC AND EXPERT OPINION TRENDS, LIMITING FACTORS

Polling of Ukrainian citizens revealed changes in political preferences of citizens that are largely caused by the war and are likely to persist and in the near future, and therefore, will influence social processes, including political, after the war is over.

Support for the foreign policy course of Ukraine's accession to the EU and NATO has grown immensely in Ukrainian society (the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians supports this course). Furthermore, the differences among regions in foreign policy orientations decreased substantially.

During the war, the credibility of the President of Ukraine has risen, giving a push to political forces that position or will position themselves as «pro-presidential», and weakening the electoral chances of the opposition parties.

In the issues of economic policy, people tend to rely on state regulation mechanisms rather than on market tools. Meanwhile, the number of adherents of a liberal economic policy is growing. So, the leading political forces in their economic policy are likely to pursue a moderate approach to the role of the state in the economy. Proceeding from the specificity of electoral preferences of different age groups, political forces targeting the younger voters will, most probably, declare a more liberal economic stand.

The issues of post-war modernisation of the Ukrainian economy, priority development of new branches and technologies will have an important place in the programmes of political forces.

In the previous years, socio-cultural division, manifested in polarisation of society on a number of humanitarian policy problems, was highly relevant for Ukrainian society. It referred to the language policy, different interpretations of Ukraine's history. However, in the recent years, especially after the beginning of the fully-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine, the opinions of different groups of the population on these issues converged on the basis of growing support for wider use of the Ukrainian language, pursuance of a policy of de-communisation and de-Russification. Therefore, it may be expected that the urgency of humanitarian issues in political rhetoric will gradually decline.

Support of Ukrainian citizens for the national democratic ideology has been growing since early 2000s. Now, this ideology is the most popular, which creates the basis for political success of political forces guided by it. On the other hand, exactly the adherents of the national democratic ideology (as well as the followers of the «green» ideology) the most frequently report the need of new political parties, prompting the opinion that the existing political parties seeking support from these groups of voters do not fully meet their political expectations.

Starting from 2011, there is also an upward trend in the number of respondents who believe that there are no parties in Ukraine, whose practical activity meets the political ideology reflecting the views of citizens (from 33% of those decided in their political ideology in 2020 to 41% in 2022). Such people are especially numerous in the South and East of Ukraine⁵. In other words, there are preconditions for emergence of new political forces, especially those seeking electoral support among residents of the Southern and Eastern parts of Ukraine.

According to the majority of the polled experts, the Russian military aggression has fundamentally changed the political life and alignment of political forces in Ukraine. In particular, according to the expert poll results, in the «post-war» period one may expect practical disappearance of pro-Russian parties from

⁵ The regional division is as follows: the West: Volyn, Transcarpathian, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Chernivtsi regions; the Centre: Kyiv city, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Sumy, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy, Chernihiv regions; the South: Mykolaiv, Odesa regions; the East: Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, Kharkiv regions (in Zaporizhia, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv regions – only the territories controlled by the Ukrainian government and free of hostilities).

the Ukrainian politics, solution of the problem of Ukraine's geopolitical choice between the «West» and the «East» that will disappear from the political discourse, a substantial decrease in the popularity and political influence of the «old» generation of politicians (who played a key role in 1990s-2000s) and the political forces led by them, a higher profile of war veterans, participants of the volunteer movement in support for the army in political life, more active participation of nongovernmental organisations in public life, growth of the interest in social problems in the political discourse, more active involvement of young people in the political life, emergence of new political forces.

Meanwhile, according to the majority of experts, the political life may see controversial processes: accelerated democratisation of public life along with the growing influence of the President in the system of governance and growing monopoly of the present party of power, exacerbation of political struggle, which may involve strengthening of authoritarian trends in the activity of the authorities and the socio-political life in general.

Restoration of political competition in the post-war period will be influenced by political

and legal factors, including restrictions imposed by the state on political actors and socio-political life in general (political parties, public associations, individual citizens) with regard to some political goals and objectives, as well as the methods of their attainment. The restrictions imposed both before the war and after the beginning of the Russian full-scale aggression on February 24, 2022, will also remain in place.

The key restrictions are provided by Article 37 of the Ukrainian Constitution of 1996 that prohibits the creation and activity of political parties and public organisations, whose programme goals or actions are aimed at liquidations of Ukraine's independence, forcible change of the constitutional system, violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state, undermining its security, unlawful seizure of state power, propaganda of war, violence, instigation of inter-ethnic, racial, religious enmity, encroachment on human rights and freedoms, public health.

Following socio-political processes and the political will of the majority of Ukrainian citizens, the Verkhovna Rada introduced to the legislation such norms as recognition of Holodomor – the Great Famine of 1932-1933



in Ukraine – as the genocide of the Ukrainian people, and its public denial – as an insult of the memory of millions of victims of Holodomor, abasement of the dignity of the Ukrainian people and an illegal act.

The following step involved the adoption of the so-called «de-communisation» laws after the victory of the Revolution of Dignity, imposing a ban on the creation and activity of parties using the slogans of restoration of the Soviet social system and the former USSR in Ukraine, as well as national-socialist parties.

Constitutionalisation of irreversibility of Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic course in 2019 and placing the duty to implement that course on the supreme bodies of state power became a milestone event. It secured the civilisational choice supported by the majority of Ukrainian citizens and imposed safeguards for any political forces that may come to power to secure invariability of the foreign policy course of the state.

The beginning of the Russian full-scale aggression against Ukraine prompted adoption of a number of legislative acts aimed at prevention and neutralisation of activity of agents of influence of the aggressor country and collaborationists in Ukraine in the person of both political parties and individuals.

Specifically, these laws: term the Russian Federation as a terrorist state, ban propaganda of the Russian Nazi totalitarian regime and its armed aggression against Ukraine, give definition of collaborationism (including in the socio-political sector) and provide criminal responsibility for it, introduce accountability of political parties, trade unions, public associations for violation of these laws and the procedures of its exercise.

Legislative restrictions imposed before 2022 resulted in prohibition of the Communist Party of Ukraine (after a long litigation). Following the Russian aggression, the **activity of 13 pro-Russian political parties was banned by the court pursuant to a decision of Ukraine's NSDC**⁶.

3. FORECASTS

Based on the studies performed within the project framework, it is possible to make some forecasts about the future socio-political situation in Ukraine after the victory over the aggressor, lifting of the martial law and restoration of competitive political processes⁷.

After the war, Ukrainian society will be rock-solid, unanimous, united around common social goals, focused on victory in the war and the further progress of Ukraine as a highly developed, democratic, influential European state, ready to defend its statehood. The war gave every citizen a clear idea of his place in the system of coordinates «friend or foe», with no room for the myths imposed by the aggressor and its agents of influence. Despite the dissatisfaction with the standards of their life, Ukrainians became more optimistically-minded and tend to believe in a better future for their country.

Ukraine will continue to develop as a democratic state. There are several reasons for that. In particular, the public increasingly supports democracy as the desired state system, the shares of those who consider a democratic political system to be «good or very good» increased substantially, the overwhelming majority of citizens prefers the European model of society development, with political democracy being its essential element. Furthermore, in the past five years, citizens much higher assess the democracy of governance of the country and are more satisfied with the work of its political system. That said, the two latter indicators strongly correlate, which proves the importance of democracy for citizens.

The threat of a «setback to authoritarianism» after the war in Ukraine is hardly feasible, despite a slight increase in support for the option of a regime led by an authoritarian leader or the military rule – both options are supported by a minority of those polled, while the overwhelming majority favours these two regimes and democracy at a time, probably

⁶ «Rus United», «Opposition Platform – For Life», «Shariy's Party», «Opposition Bloc», «Socialists», «Ours», «Derzhava», «Bloc of Volodymyr Saldo», «Justice and Development» Party, Socialist Party of Ukraine, «Left Opposition», «Union of Left Forces» and the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine. – Ukrinform, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politics/3572345-v-ukraini-ostatocno-zaboronili-dialnist-opzz.html>.

⁷ The forecasts below rest on the project research materials and do not claim to be all-embracing, some topics and problems critical for society could be left unattended.

viewing the «military rule» as a way to defend democracy in the conditions a military standoff with the aggressor.

Safeguards against authoritarian trends and curtailment of democracy include the high appraisal of the value of freedom, rated higher than equality by the overwhelming majority of citizens, somewhat lower than the value of security (even in wartime).

By and large, one may expect further growth of interest in politics in Ukrainian society and public demand for personal influence on it, wider involvement in civic activism.

Among the state institutes, the Armed Forces and the President will continue to enjoy the highest credibility among citizens, largely attributed to the constitutional powers of the latter as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the AFU. Other institutes of governance, such as the Government and the Verkhovna Rada, enjoy lower public trust, while the judicial branch is among the leaders of mistrust. Despite this latter point, the position of the current authorities may generally be considered firm. The low trust in political parties and the institute of elections, most probably, will not prevent them from the discharge of their functions at elections after the war.

The trends towards strengthening of authoritarianism may be observed but will hardly materialise — due to the above-mentioned trend to support democracy and quite expected investigation of events of the initial period of the war and possible accusations of some high-ranking officials (including from the presidential milieu and his political party) after the war.

Safeguards against possible violation of the balance of power and authoritarian trends may also include the position of Ukraine's international partners, public confidence in whom has grown substantially, Ukraine's status of a candidate for accession to the EU and close attention to it, growing influence of civil society organisations of different trends, enjoying high trust among citizens, and their outreach.

The public will strongly demand an active role of the state in the economy and especially

in social security issues. Most probably, it is not about «redistribution» or «egalitarianism» but rather about the defence of those strata of the population that require it most of all because of the war. There are roughly as many adherents of individual freedom, liberally-minded citizens in Ukraine as adherents of state restrictions on inequality and étatism. The former are mainly the younger people.

Regarding public support for specific policy lines in different sectors, the following may be singled out.

The problem of choosing the geopolitical trend of Ukraine's development will probably cease to be a factor of social and political division. The course of joining the EU and NATO enjoys support of the overwhelming majority of the population, as does the European model of society development, while their «antipodes» — integration with Russia or the Russian model — are supported by a small minority.

The public opinion about the previously thorniest issues causing social and cultural division — the language policy, state support for the Ukrainian language, de-communisation, de-Russification — follows the same logic. A consensus of the majority of citizens on those issues is being formed. Therefore, those issues will have a lower profile in political struggle. In this context one should note the importance of war-time decisions of the state authorities, banning propaganda of the aggressor country, providing responsibility for collaborationism, practical measures at detection and bringing of the culprits to account.

In the economy, as we noted above, the demand of part of the citizens for a stronger role of the state will coexist with the support for a more liberal economic policy by the other part. During the post-war recovery, those approaches, as well as the issues of the ratio between the «traditional» and «new» branches in the new structure of the national economy and the priority of their development, the relations of the state and business, may well become the central subjects of discussion among political parties, instead of geopolitical or socio-cultural problems, as before.

It may be predicted that the high demand of citizens for security and support for defence

capabilities, trust in AFU, as well as the demand for a strong social policy of the state traditional for the post-war period will condition greater attention to these problems on the part of the authorities and political forces of different trends.

The ideological range of political parties in Ukraine is undergoing (and has undergone) significant changes. The ban on pro-Russian political parties fully meets the public sentiments, demonstrating minimal support for the ideology of the «Russian world». Since such ideas were inherent in some parties positioning themselves as left or centre-left, taking into account the laws on de-communisation and a substantial decline in the popularity of the «back to the USSR» ideas (in one or another form), it may be assumed that the future party system will hardly have the room for parties of the socialist/communist trend.

The bulk of political forces will apparently be national-democratic, combining social-democratic and liberal approaches (in different proportions) in the economic and social policy. Given the scale of the environmental disaster in Ukraine caused by the war and the existence of the relevant public demand, environmental («green») parties may reappear in the party system. It may be assumed that the main political forces in Parliament will be centrist.

In terms of foreign policy preferences, most political parties will support Ukraine's course of accession to the EU and NATO. Meanwhile, the existence of citizens who do not support this course or see no political parties representing their views now (the share of such people is significant in the Southern and Eastern regions) may give a chance to political forces standing for a «separate path of Ukraine's development, resting on its national

specificity». However, those parties will not be pro-Russian.

It may be predicted that the party spectrum after the war will see co-existence of the «old» political parties, now represented in Parliament, and the «new» ones, created after the war. Meanwhile, given the high level of trust in the military, one may expect their active involvement in politics. As the experience of 2014-2015 shows, it may happen both through the creation of new parties, including «specialised», or through the involvement of the military in the existing structures. The same can be said about the volunteer movement.

By and large, society will more actively influence the political life, especially citizens who helped the army, the displaced population, etc. during the war, as well as the young people.

The position of the «party of power» is now considered firm, and the chances of the present opposition coming to power – as low. However, the dynamics of their balance are hardly predictable, given the war conditions and the variance of future political developments.

Potential factors of tension in the future socio-political processes may also include attempts of strengthening authoritarian trends in the activity of the ruling team and an attempt of monopolisation of power, limitation of the freedom of mass media, a significant change of the balance in the system of governance in favour of the institute of presidency, a decline of tolerance in inter-church relations, social, socio-economic and socio-psychological effects of the war in general. Meanwhile, timely detection and articulation of these risks enables timely planning and implementation of measures for their prevention.

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