CIVIC ACTIVISM DURING WAR: UKRAINIAN CONTEXT

Olga Kuzmuk,
Candidate of Sociological Sciences, Associate Professor,
Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science and Public Administration,
Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University (Lutsk, Ukraine)
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9729-1785
kuzmuk-olga@ukr.net

Abstract. The article examines the ability of civic initiatives to form new social connections and propose innovative solutions in response to challenges arising in wartime conditions. In the current crisis situation caused by the war in Ukraine, the role of civil society becomes particularly important, as it is through community activism that effective ways to overcome difficulties can be found. Supporting such initiatives is critically important for strengthening civil society and ensuring resilience in times of crisis. The article also emphasizes that the social connections formed during the implementation of civic initiatives and projects contribute not only to solving urgent problems but also to fostering trust and cooperation among community members. The conclusions of this work can serve as a basis for developing strategies to support civic engagement, which, in turn, will promote positive social changes in society.

Key words: civic activism, civic engagement, volunteering, civil society, social change.

Introduction. Life in conditions of war and social instability presents new challenges to society; at the same time, these challenges also open up opportunities for positive social change. Civic activism during armed conflicts can serve as a mobilizing factor for society, engaging various segments of the population in actively addressing urgent issues. The article examines the forms and factors of civic activism, as well as the peculiarities of its development in wartime, with a focus on the diverse initiatives that arise in response to crisis situations.

War often acts as a catalyst for change, creating new opportunities for the formation of social bonds. People, uniting around a common goal, find support in one another, which in turn fosters the emergence of new forms of interaction. For example, volunteer movements that arise in response to the needs of military personnel and civilians not only provide assistance but also strengthen social connections that may remain active even after the conflict ends.

The empirical foundation of the research is a series of sociological studies conducted by the Analytical Center «Volyn» at Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University. These studies focus on examining forms of civic activism, the motivations of participants, the challenges they face, and the achievements made during the war. The research employs qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, which allow for a deeper understanding of the needs and interests of civic activists and others actively participating in their community life.

This research covers the period starting from the beginning of the war in 2022, when Ukraine faced a full-scale armed conflict. Our analysis focuses on various forms of civic activism, including volunteering and other civic and social initiatives. The results of the studies open new perspectives for exploring the role of civic activism in shaping social order, increasing societal awareness of the importance of active participation in public affairs.

The methodological framework is based on a systemic approach, allowing civic activism to be viewed as a complex system with numerous interconnected elements. In this context, it is important to explore the individual actions of citizens, which may include volunteering, participation in social campaigns, and initiatives aimed at supporting those affected (such as internally displaced persons). Individual actions are shaped by various factors, including personal motivations, social connections,

and cultural norms. Additionally, it is essential to consider the role of political parties and civic organizations, which play a significant part in shaping civic activism. They not only coordinate efforts but also provide a platform for expressing opinions that influence political decisions and shape public opinion.

Main part. War creates new challenges and conditions that significantly impact the forms and mechanisms of civic activism. During wartime, we observe how public engagement can transform into numerous initiatives, ranging from volunteering and humanitarian aid to participation in organizing protests and social campaigns. These diverse forms of activity not only contribute to solving urgent problems but also help strengthen democratic institutions by increasing the level of accountability of authorities to the population.

The study of these manifestations of civic activism will reveal key trends and mechanisms that shape the political reality in Ukraine during wartime. This knowledge is crucial for understanding not only the current situation but also future political processes, as active citizen participation can become the foundation for strengthening statehood and developing a democratic society.

This comprehensive approach will allow for a deeper understanding of how citizens adapt to new conditions, actively mobilizing their efforts to address social and political issues. Exploring these forms of activism within the framework of the research will help identify key trends that may influence the future socio-political life in Ukraine, as well as the formation of democratic values in society.

In wartime, the influence of civic activism takes on particular significance, as people unite around common goals and aspirations. This unification amplifies their voices in the political discourse, making them more heard and meaningful. Active engagement of the population in societal processes not only helps address specific issues but also strengthens democratic values, which in turn fosters an overall increase in social responsibility.

Such initiatives serve several important functions. First, they help solve urgent problems faced by society, such as assisting the military, supporting refugees, or restoring infrastructure. Second, these initiatives create a platform for engaging a broader range of people in active participation in public life. This involvement can take various forms, from volunteer projects to participation in civic organizations, providing diverse opportunities for activism.

Thus, citizen activism not only strengthens social ties but also promotes the development of democratic processes in the country. When more people engage in public life, it creates conditions for fostering responsibility and activity in political matters. Citizens become more aware of their rights and duties, which in turn raises the overall level of democratic awareness. This heightened consciousness can lead to a more engaged and informed electorate, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and participatory democracy.

Civic activism is an important subject of study that encompasses various theoretical approaches and concepts, helping to understand its nature and impact on society, especially in wartime conditions. In book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert Putnam analyzes the decline of social capital in the United States and its negative effects on civic engagement. He argues that reduced participation in civic organizations leads to a weakening of democracy, a point that becomes particularly relevant during armed conflicts (Putnam, 2000).

This perspective highlights the critical role of social connections and community involvement in sustaining democratic values and fostering resilience in times of crisis. Understanding these dynamics can provide valuable insights into how civic activism can be cultivated and strengthened, even amidst the challenges posed by war.

G. Almond and S. Verba, in their work *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, explore models of civic participation across different countries, emphasizing the significance of political culture in stimulating citizen engagement during times of crisis (Almond & Verba, 1963). C. Tilly, in his book *Social Movements, 1768–2004*, analyzes the evolution of social movements, their role in political change, and how they shape civic activism during wartime (Tilly, 2004).

Both works contribute to a deeper understanding of how political culture and social movements influence civic participation, particularly in challenging contexts like war, highlighting the importance of fostering an engaged citizenry for the health of democracy.

J. Rawls, in his work *A Theory of Justice* (1971), emphasizes the importance of active citizen participation in achieving social justice, which becomes particularly relevant in the context of war. M. L. King, in his *Letter from Birmingham Jail* (1963), argues for the moral necessity of civil disobedience as a means of fighting for human rights, highlighting the ethical dimensions of activism during crisis situations (Rawls, 1971). Authors underscore the critical role of civic engagement in promoting justice and human rights, especially in times of conflict, reinforcing the idea that active participation is essential for fostering a just and equitable society.

N. Fraser, in her work *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the Post-Socialist State*, analyzes gender and racial aspects of civic activism, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity in the struggle for social justice, especially in times of war. J. Merki, in *The Role of Youth in Civic Engagement* (2015), explores forms of youth participation in civic initiatives, highlighting how they become agents of change during crises (Fraser, 1997). M. Foucault in *Digital Activism: The Future of Civic Participation* (2019), examines the impact of digital technologies on civic activism, which is a key factor in mobilization during armed conflicts. M. Foucault investigates how power and knowledge shape civic activism, stressing the connection between identity and political participation in wartime conditions (Foucault, 1976). Together, these works offer a multifaceted understanding of civic activism, focusing on inclusivity, the role of youth, the influence of technology, and the interplay between power and identity, all of which are essential for fostering effective civic engagement in challenging contexts.

P. Bourdieu, in his work *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, examines social practices as the result of interactions between structural conditions and individual actions, emphasizing how social capital and cultural resources influence citizen participation in public affairs during crises. C. Haas, in *Collaboration and Engagement Politics* (2013), analyzes the importance of cross-sectoral cooperation for achieving social change, highlighting how collective efforts can enhance the effectiveness of civic activism during wartime (Bourdieu, 1977). These perspectives underscore the complex interplay between individual agency and structural factors in shaping civic engagement, as well as the critical role of collaboration in fostering meaningful social change in challenging contexts.

T. Judt, in his work *Citizenship and National Identity* (2007), examines how national identity influences civic activism, emphasizing the importance of active citizen participation in shaping a democratic society. E. Defenbach, in *Public Activism and Local Governance* (2015), explores how local initiatives can impact governance and policy, highlighting the role of citizens in shaping local policy during conflicts. S. Steinbrück, in *Activism and Agency* (2010), investigates the role of women in social movements, underlining how their participation can transform the dynamics of activism. J. Lynch, in *Civic Participation in the 21st Century* (2019), analyzes contemporary forms of civic engagement in the context of technological changes, stressing the significance of digital platforms for mobilizing citizenship.

A. Thier, in *The Politics of Community* (2011), discusses how the concept of «civic activism» can be utilized for political purposes, emphasizing the need for a critical approach to participation. The work *Youth Civic Engagement* (2016) explores how young people in various countries participate in civic activism, highlighting the cultural and social contexts that shape their engagement. These studies provide a comprehensive view of the multifaceted nature of civic engagement, highlighting the influence of identity, gender, local initiatives, technology, and youth participation in fostering active citizenship.

G. Thunberg, in her work *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (2019), emphasizes the importance of individual activism in the fight against climate change, calling on youth to take action and engage in active citizenship. F. S. Lewis, in *Engaged Citizens: The Role of Civic Education* (2014), explores how education fosters the development of civic activism, highlighting the import-

ance of nurturing aware and active citizens in the context of war. These works underscore the significance of personal participation and education in shaping active citizenship, which is critically important in contemporary conditions.

Civic engagement is defined as the participation of citizens in activities aimed at improving living conditions in society through various initiatives and organizations. This concept encompasses a wide range of actions that can be both formal and informal. In the context of war, civic engagement becomes particularly important, as it is in crisis situations that citizens demonstrate their ability to mobilize and collaborate for a common purpose (Hresko, 2015).

In the context of war, civic engagement can encompass volunteering, which includes providing humanitarian aid, supporting military personnel, organizing temporary accommodation for internally displaced persons, and offering psychological support to those affected. Overall, civic engagement is an important element of a democratic society that fosters social cohesion, shapes active citizenship, and enhances overall welfare. In times of crisis, such as during war, civic engagement becomes particularly valuable, as it allows communities to unite, find common solutions, and actively influence positive changes in society.

In times of war, civic engagement manifests in numerous forms of citizen participation in public life, gaining particular significance during crisis periods. One of the most common forms is volunteering, which includes assistance to both military personnel and the civilian population, as well as involvement in non-governmental organizations that address social and humanitarian issues. Additionally, active citizens engage in public campaigns that focus on raising awareness of pressing problems, as well as in initiatives that respond to the needs of society. These forms of engagement highlight the importance of solidarity and mutual aid, demonstrating how citizens can contribute to positive change even in the context of armed conflict.

The evolution of civic engagement during armed conflicts demonstrates the flexibility and adaptability of citizens in responding to the challenges that arise in crisis situations. Public campaigns and initiatives that emerge during this period aim to draw attention to urgent issues that require immediate resolution and to mobilize society to address them. This can include everything from fundraising to organizing public and socio-political actions, highlighting the importance of active participation from each citizen in shaping the future of their community.

War induces a high level of stress, which can simultaneously stimulate and inhibit citizen engagement. Patriotic feelings and the desire to protect one's country often motivate individuals to participate actively in political and civic initiatives. During this time, many seek to join volunteer projects, social campaigns, and movements that support the community.

The level of trust in political institutions is a critically important factor that directly influences civic engagement during wartime. A high level of trust typically stimulates population activity, as people who believe in their institutions are more likely to participate in social initiatives, support government efforts, and engage in community actions.

When citizens feel that their needs and interests are considered, they are more likely to participate in social processes. This can manifest in active support for government programs, participation in community meetings, or initiatives aimed at improving life in their communities. Conversely, corruption, inefficiency, and lack of transparency in government actions can significantly diminish trust in political institutions. When people see their representatives acting against their interests and engaging in personal or corrupt affairs, it can lead to frustration and disillusionment. As a result, protest sentiments rise, and citizens begin to seek ways to express their dissatisfaction. Thus, the level of trust in political institutions has a significant impact on the evolution of forms of civic engagement during wartime. When trust increases, society becomes more cohesive, and citizens engage more actively in public affairs. In contrast, when trust declines, it can lead to social conflicts, protests, and even the radicalization of certain groups.

It is essential for political institutions to work on building citizens' trust through transparent and effective actions that address the population's needs. This not only fosters stability in society but also activates civic participation in addressing urgent issues faced by the country during wartime.

The socio-economic situation in a country, including unemployment rates, income levels, and access to resources, can significantly impact civic engagement. During wartime, many people face economic hardships, which may reduce their willingness to participate in community initiatives. However, at the same time, these economic difficulties can motivate individuals to unite efforts to address common problems. The political context also plays a crucial role. The presence or absence of political stability, the level of corruption, and trust in state institutions all influence the extent of citizen involvement in political processes. In crisis situations, such as war, civic activity may increase in response to the need for change and improvement in the situation.

Media and information technologies have become an integral part of modern life. In wartime, they can play a dual role: on one hand, they inform the public about ongoing events, and on the other, they can be tools for manipulation and misinformation. Social networks, in particular, create new opportunities for organizing protests and mobilization, but they can also contribute to the spread of panic and dissatisfaction.

Psychological factors such as fear, anxiety, and a sense of hopelessness can significantly influence civic engagement. During war, many individuals experience stress, which can either paralyze them or spur them into action.

A comprehensive analysis of all these factors reveals not only opportunities but also threats to political mobilization and civic participation. This knowledge is critical for strengthening democratic institutions and national resilience during wartime, as it fosters the development of appropriate responses to the challenges facing society and helps ensure active citizen involvement in shaping the country's future.

War not only stimulates citizen participation in volunteer and humanitarian projects but also fosters the emergence of new leadership roles among the population. During this challenging time, active involvement in organizing various initiatives reflects a growing civic consciousness. People demonstrate a willingness to take responsibility for improving living conditions, even in crisis situations. Citizen activity becomes a crucial factor not only for overcoming the consequences of war but also for shaping new leaders who can drive positive change in society. This indicates that in times of crisis, Ukrainians are ready to unite their efforts to collectively strive for a better future.

Research shows that civic engagement in Ukraine during the full-scale war remains at a high level and manifests in many forms. The most common of these are volunteering and providing humanitarian aid, which receive substantial support from the population. These forms of activity not only help meet urgent needs but also strengthen social bonds, fostering a sense of community and solidarity among citizens.

Volunteering has become a crucial element in organizing support for those affected by the war. Many people come together in groups to provide assistance, organize fundraising efforts, and supply essential resources to those in need. This not only reflects a desire to help but also highlights the activity and initiative of citizens in addressing social issues.

Humanitarian aid also plays a key role in supporting those in difficult situations. People actively participate in collecting and distributing food, clothing, and other essential items, reflecting a high level of compassion and willingness to support each other in challenging times. This process not only meets physical needs but also fosters a sense of hope and solidarity within the community, which is critically important during wartime.

Patriotism and personal duty serve as the main motives driving citizens to actively participate in supporting their country. This reflects the conscious attitude of the population towards their civic responsibilities during wartime. These factors underscore the critical role of active citizen involvement in fostering social solidarity and mutual support during armed conflict.

Civic activity during wartime is an important indicator of social cohesion within society. In the context of the full-scale war in Ukraine, citizens unite around a common goal – defending their country. This unity not only demonstrates the strength of national spirit but also creates opportunities for developing new forms of cooperation and interaction among people.

Active participation in volunteer initiatives, humanitarian projects, and support for military personnel and refugees reflects a high level of social responsibility. People not only seek to help but also recognize that every contribution, no matter how small, can significantly impact the overall situation. This collective desire to act fosters new connections among citizens, strengthening the sense of community and mutual support.

Thus, patriotism and personal duty become not only driving forces for individual actions but also the foundation for collective activity. This underscores that in times of crisis, society can mobilize its resources for a common goal, creating an atmosphere of support and harmony. The civic engagement demonstrated during the war reflects the maturity and resilience of the nation, as well as the readiness of its members to stand up for their values, freedom, and independence.

In wartime, when a country faces unprecedented challenges, political and civic activity take on special significance. They not only support state institutions but also promote the consolidation of society, mobilization of resources, and enhancement of the population's morale. During this challenging time, citizens who are actively engaged in political and civic life play a crucial role in shaping national unity and resilience against external threats.

Such collective effort helps strengthen society by providing support during difficult times and facilitating a united response to challenges. Citizens come together around common goals and aspirations, enhancing their ability to react to crises. This not only reinforces the social fabric of society but also fosters an active civic stance, which is essential for the country's development.

Thus, civic activity is an integral component of modern society, especially in wartime, where its role in supporting the stability and development of the nation becomes particularly significant. These efforts not only address urgent issues but also lay the foundation for a future in which active citizens become the driving force for change.

However, there are several issues that hinder civic activity among the population. Firstly, there is a low level of awareness regarding civic participation. This problem is particularly relevant for youth and marginalized groups, who often feel passive and alienated from the socio-political process and the life of their city, town, or village. Raising awareness in this area is crucial for activating citizens and strengthening democratic processes in the country.

Additionally, a serious barrier is the lack of trust in political institutions. This, in turn, diminishes the motivation to participate in various forms of civic activity. Restoring trust in political structures is critically important for engaging the population in active political life.

Thirdly, there is a lack of opportunities for citizens to actively participate in public life. Insufficient support for community initiatives, a lack of infrastructure for implementing volunteer projects, and limited access to resources hinder the development of civic activity. Many initiatives fail to materialize due to a shortage of funding and organizational support.

Thus, to overcome these barriers, it is essential to implement comprehensive measures aimed at raising citizen awareness, restoring trust in political institutions, and creating favorable conditions for the development of civic activity. Only under such circumstances can significant progress be made in strengthening democratic values and enhancing population participation in the political life of the country.

These challenges will require a comprehensive approach to their resolution. It is important to develop and implement effective strategies that promote civic activity while ensuring adequate support from state institutions and civil society organizations. Such an approach will create a favorable environment for the development of citizen engagement and the strengthening of civil society.

Youth is one of the most active and dynamic groups in society, capable of quickly adapting to new forms of participation in political and public life. Young people typically have a high level of awareness regarding modern technologies and actively use social media as a tool to express their thoughts and aspirations. They seek change and desire to influence political processes, making them vital participants in civic life.

To engage youth in projects, it is essential to focus on educational programs, training sessions, and the implementation of digital platforms. This will create conditions for active participation of young people in community initiatives and political events, allowing them to influence society. It is important that these programs are accessible and meet the needs of youth, encouraging them to take active steps.

Additionally, supporting and developing volunteer movements is critical for strengthening social cohesion and mobilizing community resources to assist the most vulnerable populations. In wartime, volunteer organizations play an essential role in providing humanitarian aid and support to those in greatest need. They serve not only as a source of assistance but also as a platform for social activity and the unification of citizens.

The implementation of the proposed measures will enhance the effectiveness of volunteer activities and strengthen trust in volunteer organizations. This, in turn, will create a favorable environment for citizen engagement and ensure assistance to those who need it most. As a result, the activation of youth and support for volunteering will not only help address pressing social issues but also reinforce democratic principles and social responsibility within society.

Conclusion. Civic activity during wartime is an important indicator of social cohesion and the ability of society to respond to the challenges that arise in conflict conditions. The analysis of various forms, factors, and features of the evolution of civic activity during this period shows that citizens are actively engaged in volunteering, providing humanitarian aid, and participating in the activities of civil organizations. These forms of activity not only provide essential support but also strengthen social ties, highlighting the importance of collective consciousness in times of crisis.

The main motivations for citizens' participation in community initiatives are patriotism, a sense of duty, and the influence of their social environment. People feel the need to act in support of their country, and this desire becomes a driving force for their activity. In this context, digital platforms play a crucial role in mobilizing citizens by providing new opportunities for organizing and coordinating actions. Social media and other online tools allow for the rapid dissemination of information, attracting new participants, and coordinating efforts.

However, despite this activity, the state of emotional stress and feelings of powerlessness can negatively affect the level of citizen participation. This underscores the need to consider psychological factors when developing support strategies. It is important to create an environment that not only encourages activity but also provides psychological support to those involved in community initiatives.

Civic activity in wartime becomes a catalyst for social change, shaping new leadership roles and strengthening democratic institutions. It not only contributes to addressing urgent issues but also opens up new opportunities for the development of civil society. Thus, civic activity during war is not only a response to challenges but also a critically important factor in fostering resilience and solidarity within society.

Researching these processes allows for a better understanding of community needs and finding effective ways to meet them during prolonged crises. This knowledge is essential for formulating strategies that ensure not only short-term support but also the long-term development of civil society, which will serve as a foundation for the further strengthening of the Ukrainian state and civil society.

To overcome the challenges that hinder civic activity, it is necessary to implement systemic measures aimed at increasing awareness and trust in political institutions. Youth is a key player in civic life,

capable of quickly adapting and using new technologies to influence political processes. Investment in educational programs and the development of volunteer movements will create opportunities for active youth participation and strengthen social cohesion. Mobilizing youth and supporting volunteering will contribute to solving social problems and reinforcing democratic values in society. Only through the joint efforts of the state, civil organizations, and active citizens can sustainable development and the strengthening of civil society be achieved.

References:
1. Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1963) The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 576 p.
2. Bourdieu, P. (1977) Outline of a Theory of Practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
3. Foucault, M. (1976) The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction. New York: Pantheon Books.
4. Fraser, N. (1997) Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the «Postsocialist» Condition. New York: Routledge.
5. Putnam, R. D. (2000) Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community. New York: Simon & Schuster. 541 p.
6. Rawls, J. (1971) A Theory of Justice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 561 p.
7. Thunberg, G. (2019) No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference. London: Penguin Books.
8. Tilly, C. (2004) Social Movements, 1768–2004. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
9. Hres'ko, O. V. (2015). The Role and Place of Civic Activity in the Process of News Creation. *State and Regions. Series: Social Communications*, 2(22), 76–80 [in Ukrainian]
10. Civic Society: Political and Socio-Legal Development Issues: Monograph. Ed. M. P. Trebina. Kharkiv: Pravo, 2013. 536 p. [in Ukrainian]
11. Latsyba, M. V., Starosolska, S. P., & Sydorenko, D. V. (2019). Civic and Charitable Organizations in Ukraine: Registration and Activity. Kyiv: TOV «Ahentstvo Ukraina», 148 p [in Ukrainian]
12. Shaihorodskyi, Yu. Zh., Andriichuk, T. S., & Didukh, A. Ya. (2011). Power and Society: Dialogue through Public Councils: Monograph. Kyiv: Palivoda, 148 p [in Ukrainian]