

# THE IMPACT OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE OF UKRAINIANS AND THE INFORMATION WARFARE

## O IMPACTO DA GUERRA RUSSO-UCRANIANA NA RESISTÊNCIA PSICOLÓGICA DOS UCRANIANOS E A GUERRA DE INFORMAÇÃO

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**Abstract:** The purpose is to determine the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on psychological resilience and the information warfare that has been going on since 2014. This study is relevant because reflected in the psycho-emotional state of society, which is under stress. A person who feels fear, anxiety, etc. is easier to control and impose certain ideologies. The general scientific and special methods were used. The analyze the current results of the study of mental health and methods of combating disinformation in the context of information warfare obtained. The author identified common psycho-emotional states of society during the Russian-Ukrainian war. Based on armed aggression, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, the negative impact of martial law was identified. The positive impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the state, the development of national identity, and social cohesion is also highlighted. The author analyzes the information and psychological component in the formation of mental health. The role of the media in shaping the psycho-emotional state is determined. Regulations and projects that guarantee information security are identified. A flowchart of recommendations for building psychological resilience under martial law has been developed. The ways to help counteract the negative impact of Russian propaganda are identified.

**Keywords:** Information Security. Information Warfare. Martial Law. Psycho-Emotional State. Psychotraumatic Disorders.

**Resumo:** O objetivo é determinar o impacto da guerra russo-ucraniana sobre a resiliência psicológica e a guerra de informação que se desenrola desde 2014. Este estudo é relevante porque se reflete no estado psico-emocional da sociedade, que está sob stress. Uma pessoa que sente medo, ansiedade, etc. é mais fácil de controlar e impor certas

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ideologias. Foram utilizados os métodos científicos gerais e especiais. A análise dos resultados actuais do estudo da saúde mental e dos métodos de luta contra a desinformação no contexto da guerra de informação foi obtida. O autor identificou estados psico-emocionais comuns da sociedade durante a guerra russo-ucraniana. Com base na agressão armada, nos crimes de guerra e nos crimes contra a humanidade, foi identificado o impacto negativo da lei marcial. O impacto positivo da guerra russo-ucraniana no Estado, no desenvolvimento da identidade nacional e na coesão social também é destacado. O autor analisa a informação e a componente psicológica na formação da saúde mental. O papel dos media na formação do estado psico-emocional é determinado. São identificados os regulamentos e projectos que garantem a segurança da informação. Foi desenvolvido um fluxograma de recomendações para a construção de resiliência psicológica sob a lei marcial. São identificadas as formas de ajudar a contrariar o impacto negativo da propaganda russa.

**Palavras-chave:** Segurança da informação. Guerra de informação. Lei Marcial. Estado psico-emocional. Perturbações psicotraumáticas.

## 1. Introduction

One of the strategic tasks of the state is to preserve the good health and well-being of the Ukrainian nation, as set out in the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 (VERKHOVNA RADA OF UKRAINE, September 30, 2019). The Russian-Ukrainian war, which has been going on since 2014, has posed threats to the achievement of this goal. The mental state of a person is variable, formed under the influence of external and internal factors. In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, characterized by armed aggression and war crimes, the human brain consciously and unconsciously reacts to the emotionally charged events of the war (VERKHOVNA RADA OF UKRAINE, March 18, 2022; VERKHOVNA RADA OF UKRAINE, December 13, 2022). Since the war, by its very nature, has a destructive purpose, the subjects involved in this process automatically receive a negative impact on their psycho-emotional state. As a result, stress occurs, accompanied by personal and emotional exhaustion, violation of our values and national identity. The World Health Organization of Ukraine conducts research on the mental state of society, according to which more than 10 million people are in various states of mental disorder, anxiety, and stress (BULAVIN and KLYMKOVETSKYI, 2022).

For example, HAIDUTSKY and HOLOBORODKO (2023) argued that regular armed conflict can lead to excessive consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. In this context, the psychological resilience of an individual who is able to identify, manage, and counteract stress during the Russian-Ukrainian war plays an important role.

SLYUSAREVSKYY (2022) noted that the psycho-emotional state of an individual during the Russian-Ukrainian war is formed and changed in three stages:

- 1) shock, fear, panic, lack of understanding of reality;
- 2) emotional excitement, solidarity, and strong belief in Ukraine's imminent victory;
- 3) adaptation to the circumstances of war, accompanied by apathy and pessimism.

SHUSTOVA (2022) argued that during martial law, proper psychological support focused on self-regulation, stress resistance, resilience, renewal of values, and emotional support is important. Qualified assistance in forming a stable psycho-emotional state is provided not only by specialists with specialized education but also by the mass media, which influence the psyche of people and shape public opinion. An important tool to counter Russian aggression is information security, which will reduce the destructive impact on society and create guarantees to protect the rights, freedoms, and interests of Ukrainian citizens (THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES OF UKRAINE, March 3, 2022). Therefore, it is appropriate to agree with HULAI and BAZYLIUK (2022) that the main goal of information security is to neutralize the adversary's negative actions, according to which the media information policy should prevent the spread of falsehood and distrust in the government.

**The purpose of the study** is to analyze the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the psychological resilience of Ukrainians and information warfare.

To achieve this goal, the following tasks need to be accomplished: 1) to study the emotional state of society during the Russian-Ukrainian war; 2) to identify the negative and positive consequences of Russian aggression against Ukraine; 3) to analyze the information and psychological component in the formation of mental health; 4) to develop a flowchart of recommendations for psychological resilience in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

## 2. Theoretical framework and literature review

The study of the psychological component of the personality in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war is a relevant topic. CHAAYA et al. (2022) argued that the war and the COVID-19 pandemic are causing an increase in the incidence of morbidity and mental health problems. The lingering effects of stress can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. The scientists also noted that due to attacks on critical infrastructure, many Ukrainian citizens do not have the opportunity to receive quality medical and psychological care.

CHUDZICKA-CZUPAŁA et al. (2023) conducted a comparative analysis of mental conditions such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress during a full-scale invasion among the Polish, Ukrainian, and Taiwanese populations. According to the results of this study, Ukrainians were in the first place in need of psychological support, Poles were in the second place, and Taiwanese were in the third place. However, as noted by CHUDZICKA-CZUPAŁA et al. (2023), more than half of Ukrainian respondents do not want to seek professional help in solving a psychological problem. The situation was similar among Taiwanese respondents. The opposite opinion was expressed by Poles, who mostly seek professional help.

XU et al. (2023), in addition to the above-mentioned destructive psychological conditions, analyzed the level of insomnia during the Russian-Ukrainian war, which turned out to be high. The researchers also analyzed strategies for increasing the psychological resilience of society in the context of armed conflict. Among them, the main ones were coping strategies and instrumental support.

PEDORENKO (2022) empirically studied the psycho-emotional state of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Germany. According to his research, the main emotional states experienced by IDPs are feelings of fear, pride, guilt, shame, optimism, anger, happiness, interest in life, joy, compassion, and confidence. The highest rates among IDPs' mental states were aggressiveness (18.8) and anxiety (17,9).

SIMILARLY, MĂRĂȘOIU (2023) studied the peculiarities of the information and psychological operation of the Russian operation, which should cause certain psycho-emotional and cognitive reactions. In this context, an important task of the state is to develop information security (HULAI and BAZYLIUK, 2022). The media information policy built on rational and cognitive skills is able to maintain a stable psychological capacity during the Russian-Ukrainian war.

In her study of the means and methods of the Russian-Ukrainian war, PATLASHYNSKA (2022) emphasized that information warfare is a global challenge to the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine. The author also noted that information security since the beginning of the full-scale invasion has been better prepared than in 2014. The introduction of the "United News" telethon at the beginning of martial law was an effective solution in the development of information policy, as it helped to reduce the level of panic, the spread of disinformation, and the state's full control over the media sphere. According to the analysis of the above works, the scientific novelty of this study is a comprehensive analysis of the impact of

the Russian-Ukrainian war on the psychological and information components that shape the mental health of the individual.

### **3. Research design and methods**

The study used philosophical, general scientific, and empirical research methods. The research design is based on the principles of objectivity, comprehensiveness, specificity, logic, and systematicity. Among the philosophical methods used were: dialectical, analytical, hermeneutical, and synergistic. The dialectical method was used to consider other views of scholars on the problem under study. Using the analytical method, the subject of research was divided into components, and tasks were defined. The hermeneutic method was used to analyze scientific texts for the interpretation of the psycho-emotional state under the influence of stress factors. The synergistic approach allowed us to identify the problem and establish the relationship between negative psycho-emotional state → post-traumatic disorder → emotional stress → resistance → emotional burnout.

The following general scientific methods of cognition were used: analysis and synthesis, deduction, system analysis, and generalization. Analysis and synthesis were used in the development of the theoretical framework of the study since emotional burnout syndrome was studied in the context of emotions, self-esteem, psyche, and intelligence. Emotional burnout affects all of these areas. Using a systematic analysis, the indicators of emotional burnout during the Russian-Ukrainian war were determined. Using the method of statistical analysis, the need for correction of the psycho-emotional state of people with emotional burnout was established. Using the method of observation and evaluation of expert opinions, the peculiarities of psychological counseling in emergency conditions were determined. The method of deduction was used in the development of preventive measures to reduce the development of emotional burnout. The method of generalization was used to identify the main theses that characterize the study. The graphical method was used to visualize and systematize the results obtained.

The study used the methodology of Boyko (2003), who considered three phases and their symptoms in the system of emotional burnout (BOYKO, 2003). Four symptoms are identified in each phase. This became the basis for the results obtained. The theoretical basis of the study is based on the works of Ukrainian and foreign scholars, as well as statistical data from official web resources. International databases were used in writing the article: Scopus, Web of Sciences,

Journal for free, WorldCat, Open DOAR. The theoretical basis of the study was developed using the following ranking method.

#### 4. Results and discussion

Russian aggression against Ukraine and civil society, which is oriented towards Western values, has a negative impact on their psycho-emotional and physical condition. The rights and freedoms of Ukrainian citizens are limited by national legal documents during martial law (President of Ukraine, 2021). The commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity is a violation of international humanitarian law and international conventions. In such circumstances, human reality becomes unstable, with a constant threat to existence. According to a survey (23.03-06.04.2023) on the Kyiv Digital platform, in which about 10 thousand Kyiv residents took part, it was found that 89% of Kyiv residents are in an unstable psycho-emotional state (SUSPILNE MEDIA, 2023). This, in turn, creates stress for our body. Any negative reaction to external factors creates micro-stress. Being under constant stress causes excessive release of the following hormones: cortisol, adrenaline, norepinephrine, insulin, prolactin, estrogen, testosterone. This results in problems with the cardiovascular system, increased sweating, weight, poor sleep, muscle weakness, fatigue, etc. In this situation, the quality of life is significantly reduced. However, according to a survey (19-25.12.2022) conducted by the Kyiv Institute of International Sociological Research, 69% of Ukrainian citizens are ready to endure current and future problems, if necessary, until Ukraine wins the war (KYIV INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SOCIOLOGY, 2022). This indicates that Ukrainian society is ready to develop psychological resilience and adapt to modern conditions.

In order to develop an effective tool for building psychological resilience, it is necessary to consider the problems of the psycho-emotional state of society during the Russian-Ukrainian war. The structure of the psycho-emotional state includes subjective assessments and experiences that are reflected in behavior and communication. According to an analysis of the literature, psychologists count about sixty mental states. During the Russian-Ukrainian war, panic, fear, anxiety, and fatigue were actively expressed.

PEDORENKO (2022) added frustration, aggressiveness, and rigidity. OSOKINA et al. (2023), considering the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on adolescents' mental health, identified post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression. Long-term exposure to such mental states causes "emotional swings," tension, irritability, indifference, exhaustion, etc.

According to the World Health Organization, about 15 million Ukrainians may suffer from mental disorders (REUTERS, 2023). Currently, many charitable projects have been developed at the public and state levels to provide psychological support to Ukrainians under martial law.

The time spent in stressful conditions affects the formation of psychological resilience. The longer a person stays in them, the faster they adapt. It is important to note that a person's psycho-emotional state depends on the information field in which he or she is exposed (SEIS, 2023). In this context, we can distinguish between the negative and positive effects of the Russian-Ukrainian war in the media. The negative consequences include: emigration, the threat of artillery and missile attacks, destruction of civilian and critical infrastructure, deaths of civilians and military personnel as a result of hostilities, sexual violence, torture, imprisonment, looting of property, etc. New values and positive changes in the country will help overcome the negative consequences of the war. The main socio-cultural changes include Ukraine's gaining the status of a candidate member of the European Union, raising the level of national identity and civic position, resolving the issue of bilingualism in Ukraine, consolidating efforts in the fight against the aggressor state, and solidarity.

SLUSAREVSKY (2022), studying the social and psychological characteristics of people under martial law, identified the following negative factors of the war: Russian propaganda; misunderstandings between groups of society that remained in Ukraine and went abroad; misunderstandings between people who seek Ukraine's victory only by means of war and those who are ready to accept Russia's conditions; collective psychotraumatization. Among the positive aspects, the author mentioned a change in the perception of the image of the Russian-Ukrainian war, national unity, increased trust in the government, and social cohesion. The media influence the formation of an emotionally colored image of the Russian-Ukrainian war, which is perceived by society and affects psychological resilience. Daily news overload from various sources of mass communication media (MCM) creates information stress, which is characterized by negative experiences.

HULAI and BAZYLIUK (2022) determined that an information and psychological operation consists in the implementation of a set of actions and measures planned, coordinated, and implemented in advance by trained agents of the aggressor state in order to capture and ensure absolute control over the state public consciousness and further influence it through psychological pressure and manipulation methods using verified information and/or fakes to disinform, destabilize, disorient and prepare for successful further political and military operations. In this context, an important task for the state and civil society is to conduct active

information warfare in order to maintain stability and trust in public administration (GUMENNYKOVA et al., 2023). According to the International organization Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Russian propaganda used social media to spread disinformation. 77% of citizens use social media to get news (ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT, 2022).

STĂNESCU (2022) confirmed that social media are used in the information war to spread fakes. The scientist also emphasized the impact of information on the emotional state.

The main means of information counteraction introduced by the state with the active participation of civil society are shown in Table 1.



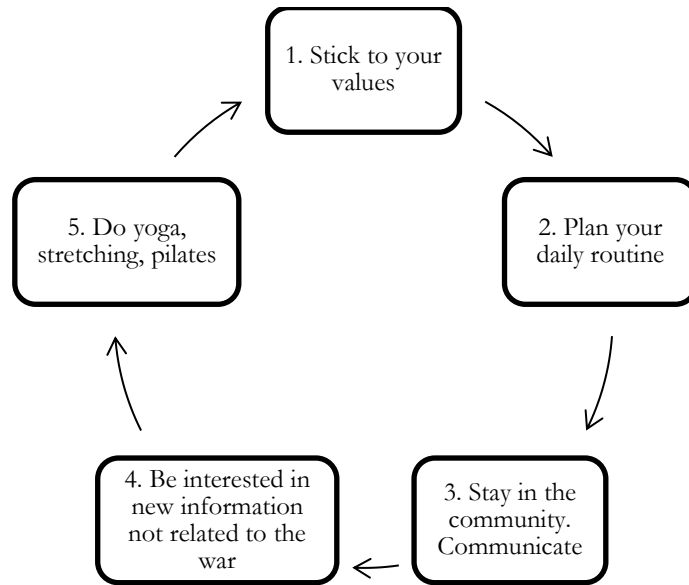
**Table 1. Ukraine's information struggle against Russian propaganda**

At the legislative level	Project solutions
Decree of the President of Ukraine of December 28, 2021 “On the Decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine of October 15, 2021 “On the Information Security Strategy” President of Ukraine (October 15, 2021).	Center for Countering Disinformation
Decree of the President of Ukraine “On the Decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine of March 19, 2022 “On the Implementation of a Unified Information Policy under Martial Law” Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (March 18, 2022)	StopRussiaChannel   MRIYA
Order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine dated March 03, 2022 “On the organization of interaction between the Armed Forces of Ukraine, other components of the defense forces and representatives of the media for the duration of the legal regime of martial law” The commander-in-chief of the armed forces of Ukraine (March 3, 2022).	“Information Ramstein”
The Law of Ukraine “On Media” of December 13, 2022 (Article 110(4)(7) and (8)) Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (December 13, 2022).	“Countering Disinformation: European Approaches and Standards” and “Countering Disinformation in the South and East of Ukraine” “NotaEnota” project

**Source:** authors' development

The Russian-Ukrainian war has transformed and strengthened Ukraine's information security. The modern information community needs to develop critical thinking and media literacy skills to counter Russian propaganda, which has a negative impact on the psycho-emotional state. CHENG and BAO (2022); CHIKUVADZE (2023) emphasized that media literacy determines a person's independent choice of media that best meets information needs, and also affects the process of their functional consumption.

To counteract the negative impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the psycho-emotional state in the context of the development of the information society, let us consider recommendations for the implementation of psychological resilience (Fig. 1):



**Figure 1. Recommendations for maintaining psychological stability under martial law**

**Source:** authors' development

As shown in Figure 1, a prerequisite for the effectiveness of this algorithm is to comprehensively follow all the recommendations every day. This, in turn, will lead to a stable emotional state. Breathing practices help in a state of anxiety and fear. Psychological resilience is formed by transforming thoughts from negative to positive thinking.

## 5. Conclusion

The study examined the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on psychological resilience and information warfare. First of all, the psycho-emotional states of society under martial law were analyzed. It was also determined that destructive mental states of the individual - overwork, fear, anxiety, rigidity, apathy, confusion, and panic - prevail at a high level. It was found that the Russian-Ukrainian war has not only negative consequences for Ukraine but also positive ones.

It was emphasized that in the context of the development of the information society, the media play an important role in shaping mental health. Therefore, in this context, it is important to develop information security to counter Russian propaganda. The study identifies a number of regulatory documents and project decisions adopted by the Government and other

organizations to counter disinformation and stabilize the political and psychological life of society.

It is concluded that in the context of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war, Ukrainian civil society is ready to develop psychological resilience to external circumstances. The authors have developed practical recommendations that include social, cognitive, and physical tasks that should be performed in a complex on a daily basis to improve psychological resilience. The authors also emphasize that in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian information war, it is important to develop media literacy skills and critically evaluate information.

Prospects for further research may include an experiment to analyze the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the mental health of civilians who have been victims of armed aggression and toxic information exposure.

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