

УДК 347.156-055.2+355.2+305-055.2
DOI: 10.31733/15-03-2024/1/381-382

Dmytro TKACHENKO
Student of Educational-and-Scientific
Institute of Law and Innovative Education

Iryna NIKITINA
Senior Lecturer of Department
of International Relations and Social
and Humanitarian Disciplines
of Dnipropetrovsk State University
of Internal Affairs

UKRAINIAN ARMY: GENDER ASPECT

Gender issues are a focal point of contemporary discussions. However, the current challenges and threats experienced by Ukrainian society add a particular urgency to the perception of gender equality, gender stereotypes, leadership, and the military aspects of this scientific problem. Often, when discussing gender, society primarily considers the expectations placed on men and women regarding the social roles they should fulfill. Gender is not just about the biological differences between men and women. Gender theory envisages a change in social reality that reflects the needs of modern times and aims to ensure gender equality.

Gender aspects are considered with an understanding of the concept of female leadership. As is known, a leader is a person who influences a group of people and encourages them to work towards common goals. According to the authors, female leadership is the ability of women to influence others to achieve goals, facilitate social dialogue, achieve understanding between the government and society, between different social strata, and strive for peace and harmony, as well as stabilize the political and economic situation in the face of challenges and threats. Moreover, female leadership is capable of humanizing social relations, ensuring peaceful conflict resolution [1].

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution of Ukraine. Article 3 of the Constitution ensures equality between men and women in all spheres of life. In addition to this provision, Articles 21, 24, and 51 are related to gender equality. Part three of Article 24 of the Constitution of Ukraine is directly devoted to overcoming discrimination against women in Ukraine and emphasizes that equality of rights between women and men is ensured by providing women with equal opportunities with men in socio-political and cultural activities, in education and professional training, in employment, and in remuneration [2].

Over the past nine years of war, which has been ongoing in Ukraine since 2014, the situation regarding the involvement of women in socio-political life has significantly changed. Women are now taking a more visible part in social processes, particularly in politics, the security sector, and defense. Similarly, public opinion increasingly expresses support for gender equality. In April 2022, the research agency Info Sapiens conducted a public opinion survey. In particular, Ukrainians were asked whether equal rights and opportunities for women and men should be ensured in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

This topic has been actively discussed over the past eight years. It is already evident that at the level of public opinion, societal support for equality is quite high. Currently, on average, about 80% of Ukrainians support or rather support this equality. This indicates that society expects active participation from women during the war and after its conclusion. According to human rights activists from Security Women, since 2014, 257 Ukrainian women have received combat awards, 9 of them, unfortunately, posthumously [3].

Due to the current circumstances (martial law), on October 7, 2022, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a law on the voluntary enlistment of women in military service. It provides that Ukrainian women of certain professions will be able to enlist voluntarily. Presently, nearly 60,000 women serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, with 41,000 holding military positions, nearly 19,000 serving in civilian roles, and 5,000 women actively participating in combat on the front lines. They serve alongside men in mixed units. Ukrainian servicewomen and veterans propose changing the status quo and creating combat units composed exclusively of women. This initiative aims to experiment, which may become established in the future [4].

Women serve in the military in other countries worldwide. While not unique, it remains more of an exception than a rule today. Some countries already have female (or predominantly female) units; however, regular armies seldom engage them directly in combat. In Israel, four infantry battalions, consisting of two-thirds women, protect Israel's borders, but their duties do not include operating behind enemy lines. One of these battalions has created an all-female tank unit guarding the border with Egypt.

Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine continues. The number of women joining active combat, various forms of volunteering, and aiding the army directly on the front lines constantly increases, proving undeniable female leadership.

During various activist-scientific discussions, it becomes evident that existing Western research on gender and war does not provide answers to the Ukrainian context.

Discussing the war situation in Ukraine, we cannot ignore the topic of Ukrainian nation-building. This ongoing war is Ukraine's struggle for independence, closely tied to national formation. Even Ukrainian women refugees do not want to be primarily seen as typical helpless victims. They act as individuals who desire agency (a sense of responsibility for their fate and readiness to participate in processes that change the world for the better) and serve as ambassadors of Ukraine globally. In Ukraine, women are building their agency, actively participating in socio-political events, volunteering, and defending Ukraine, including on the front lines [3]. Women take their responsibilities seriously and strive, alongside men, to bring Ukraine closer to victory. Under such circumstances, Ukraine is already perceived by the global community as a unique state where, in practice, during combat operations, the skills, abilities, and aspirations of men and women are equally combined in achieving peace and convincing gender equality [2].

However, despite these advancements, challenges remain in ensuring full gender equality within the Ukrainian Army. Gender stereotypes and biases may still persist in certain quarters, hindering women's advancement and participation in certain military roles. Additionally, there may be structural and systemic barriers that need to be addressed to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in the military.

To address these challenges and further promote gender equality, the Ukrainian Army continues to implement policies and initiatives aimed at supporting women's recruitment, retention, and career advancement. This includes providing equal opportunities for training and professional development, as well as creating a supportive and inclusive organizational culture that values diversity and respects the contributions of all its members, regardless of gender [1].

In conclusion, the Ukrainian Army is making significant strides in embracing gender equality and diversity within its ranks. By recognizing the valuable contributions of women and actively promoting their participation in all aspects of military service, Ukraine is not only strengthening its armed forces but also reaffirming its commitment to upholding universal principles of equality, human rights, and dignity for all.

1. Hryniuk D., Smyrnov I., Stepanets I. Gender aspects in the historical origins of military tourism (on the example of the Czech amazon women). *VI International Scientific and Practical Conference «Multidisciplinary scientific notes. Theory, history and practice»* (Edmonton, 01-04 November 2022). Edmonton, Canada. 2022. P. 173–179.

2. Kozachuk V. L. et al. Gender Education of Cadets in Higher Education Institutions of the Ukrainian Security Forces. *Health Education and Health Promotion*. 2022. P. 161–166.

3. Petrova L., Rebrii I., Zubrytskyi H. The role and place of women in the army of Ukraine in the context of gender equality. *Scientific Journal of the Military University of Land Forces*. 2023. Vol. 1. Issue 207. P. 20–32.

4. War brings Ukraine's women new roles and new dangers. *securitywomen*. URL : <https://www.securitywomen.org/post/war-brings-ukraineswomen-new-roles-and-new-dangers>.