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Victory-in-freedom: Ukraine's democratic resilience in the face of war¹

*Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the
price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I
know not what course others may take; but as for me, give
me liberty or give me death!*

***Patrick Henry, speech at the Second Virginia
Convention (1775) (Kidd, 2011: p. 52)***

Not only has the surge of Ukraine's public support for democratic values and institutions since Russia's mass brutal invasion of February 2022 (Alexseev, Dembitskyi, 2022) been on a scale unprecedented in democratization history (Onuch, 2022), but it notably showed that democracy support in states experiencing armed conflict may increase and be sustained, rather than decline, as much of social science literature indicates (Rasler, Thompson, 2004; Davis, Silver, 2004; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Hetherington, Suhay, 2011; Dyrstad, 2013; Marshall, Cole, 2014; Tir, Singh, 2015). And while weighing on the side of research showing that wartime mobilization may bolster democratic resilience (Skocpol, 2002; Gaines, 2002; Woods, 2011; Berinsky, 2009), the present study contributes to these literatures by indicating that wartime democracy support is, to a significant extent, context- and time-contingent and

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geopolitically relational. Specifically, we find that the Ukrainians' enduring commitment to be a thriving democracy is strongly interrelated with their determination to see Russia pushed out of Ukraine's internationally recognized territory and, in doing so, to atone for their devastating shared losses and sacrifices.

This is one of the main findings of our survey and focus group research in Ukraine from late 2021 through the fall of 2023. First, we use a panel (longitudinal) tracking poll of 329 respondents, broadly representative of Ukraine's population in territories under Kyiv's control, first interviewed in the Ukraine National Academy of Sciences Institute of Sociology (UNASIS) annual monitoring survey in November 2021 and then reinterviewed in June-July 2022 and in June-August 2023. Second, we analyze a survey of 869 new respondents polled in late June 2023 with identically worded questions as the ones we used in the longitudinal survey. Third, we draw on four focus groups, conducted in mid-September 2023 (with eight participants each) and representing Ukraine's main macro-regions: Center (Kyiv and Kyiv province); West (Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk); East (Kharkiv and Donetsk); and South (Odesa and Mykolaiv).

Reflecting changes in population movements in Ukraine resulting from the Russian invasion, our 2022 and 2023 surveys assess the state of public opinion in territories governed by Kyiv, but exclude territories under Russian occupation, as well as contested settlements along the line of high-intensity fighting or among Ukrainians who fled the country. Our research design, data, and methods of analysis to a significant degree offset the effects of regional composition shifts and some other problems in wartime polling.¹

In our panel survey, the prewar baseline sample of 1,800 respondents was obtained through in-person selection protocols used in the UNASIS annual surveys. Divergencies on socio-demographic composition (notably, age and gender) in follow-up telephone polls were within the sampling error margin. The biggest change from 2021 to 2022 and 2023 was the decrease of the percentage of respondents living at polling time in the Donbas (6.7 to 1.2 percent) and in the South (16.3 to 10.9 percent). No respondents lived in the Luhansk Oblast in 2022 and 2023 and in Kherson Oblast in 2023 (3 in 2022). Based on the distributional properties of the data, the effects of these shifts have been withing about 5 percent. Partially offsetting these shifts was our ability to hold the proportions of respondents in Ukraine's East based on their 2021 residence relatively constant (23 v. 20.4 percent). In our larger ($N=869$) sample newly recruited in 2023 we had a slightly larger share of respondents residing in the Donbas (1.8 percent) and more respondents ($N=11$) in Kherson. Our statistical models for repeated measures additionally controlled for language, income, and region.

Principal findings

Democracy Importance

In our two 2023 surveys over 80 percent of respondents—about the same share as our panel survey in 2022—told us democracy was mostly or very important to them personally. In our new poll of June 2023 ($N=869$) the results were nearly identical to

¹ <https://www.ponarseurasia.org/how-reliable-are-polls-in-wartime-ukraine/>

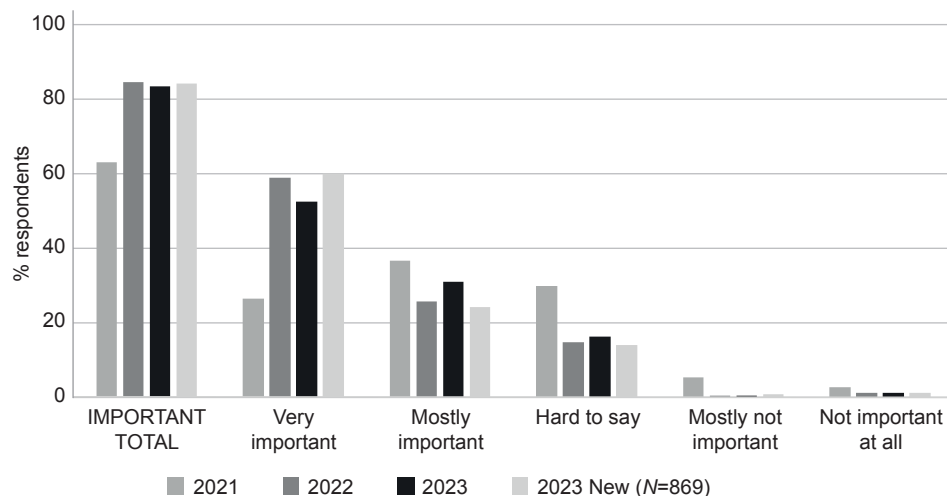


Figure 1. Importance of Democracy Strong Among Ukrainians

those in the panel survey in 2022 (see Figure 1). We used the survey question asking: “Do you consider Ukraine’s development as a democracy important to you personally?” (on a scale from “1” being “not important at all” to “5” being “very important”).

A six percentage-points shift from “very important” to “mostly important” in our 2023 panel survey ($N=329$) was not statistically significant. The findings were virtually the same when respondents were asked whether free speech—an important democratic value—was important to them.

The results reported in the later sections in more detail also held up in longitudinal regression analysis that controls not only for the differences among individual respondents, but also for differences over time by individual respondent.

Democratic Resilience

This continuity of Ukraine’s public legitimation of democracy—widely considered a social foundation of democracy survival (Weber, 1965; Lipset, 1959; Easton, 1975; Diamond, 1999)—is particularly remarkable given the deep, widespread, and growing personal loss and trauma resulting from Russia’s invasions of Ukraine since 2014.

Regarding personal loss, between November 2021 and June 2023, we observe a rise from 20 to 80 percent of the number of Ukrainians who reported family members and friends injured/wounded or killed, or who lost their jobs, homes, or other property or who got displaced after fleeing the war zone rose or escaping Russia’s indiscriminate bombardments and missile strikes across Ukraine (Figure 2a). Of note is the rise from mid-2022 to mid-2023 of the number of survey respondents reporting death or injury of their family members and close friends. Importantly, year-on-year increases are statistically significant for all loss categories, meaning they are less than five percent likely to have occurred by chance.

The number of Ukrainians experiencing typical manifestations of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (with an important caveat that the traumatic experiences persist and are not, in that sense, “post-traumatic”) such as anxiety, monophobia (fear

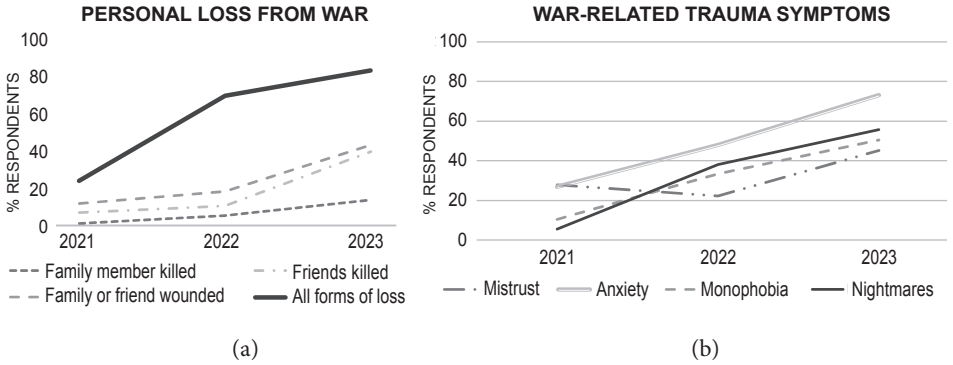


Figure 2. Wartime Personal Loss and Trauma in Ukraine (Panel Survey, 2021-2023, N=329)

of being alone) and war-related nightmares posted a stunning increase since 2021 (Figure 2b). The increase in trauma levels in all categories except “mistrusting everyone” was statistically significant year-on-year. And as far as mistrust, its decline in the first four months following Russia’s full-scale invasion was typical of unprecedented rallying and solidarity in the short-term aftermath of such events associated with increase in social trust (Skocpol 2002). But from June 2022 through June/July 2023 the mistrust tendency increased significantly.

Difference of means tests with our 2021-2023 tracking sample (N=329) also showed that respondents who experienced at least one form of personal loss or reported at least one form of war-related trauma were statistically (with 95 percent confidence) no more or less likely to consider democracy as important for Ukraine as the war continued. Among those who experienced loss, the average level of democracy support on a 1-5 scale rose from just over 3.9 in November 2021 to around 4.4 both in June 2022 and June/July 2023. Among those who experienced trauma, democracy support levels rose, respectively, from 3.75 to around 4.35. In short, the highly significant surge of democracy support in response to Russia’s full-scale invasion was sustained over more than a year of grueling, devastating aggression against Ukraine.

Commitment to Victory

While dealing with mounting personal loss and trauma, our survey respondents overwhelmingly continued to believe in victory over Russia and stayed determined in their support for Ukraine fully regaining its territorial integrity. In both our tracking survey and the new larger survey of June 2023, about 97 percent of respondents said they believed in Ukraine’s war victory. And while about 6.5 of people in our tracking poll switched from “completely believe” to “mostly believe” between 2022 and 2023, this shift was not statistically significant and was probably less pronounced judging by our larger June 2023 survey (Figure 3).

Also, according to the latter survey (N=869), faith in victory was practically uniform across Ukraine’s four macro-regions, with the only notable difference of 1.25 more percentage points in the Center being statistically insignificant.

Our research shows that to about 80 percent of Ukrainians in both surveys in June 2023, victory meant restoring Ukraine’s sovereignty within the 1991 internationally

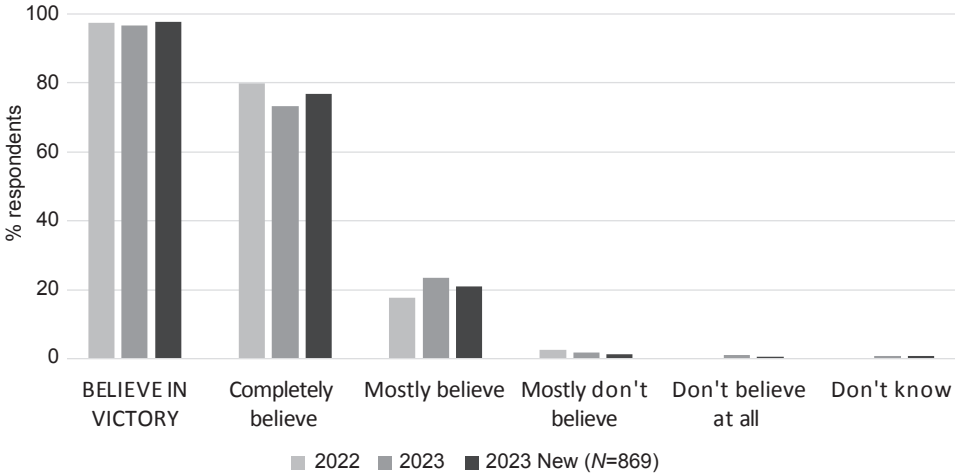


Figure 3. Ukrainians Strongly Believe in War Victory

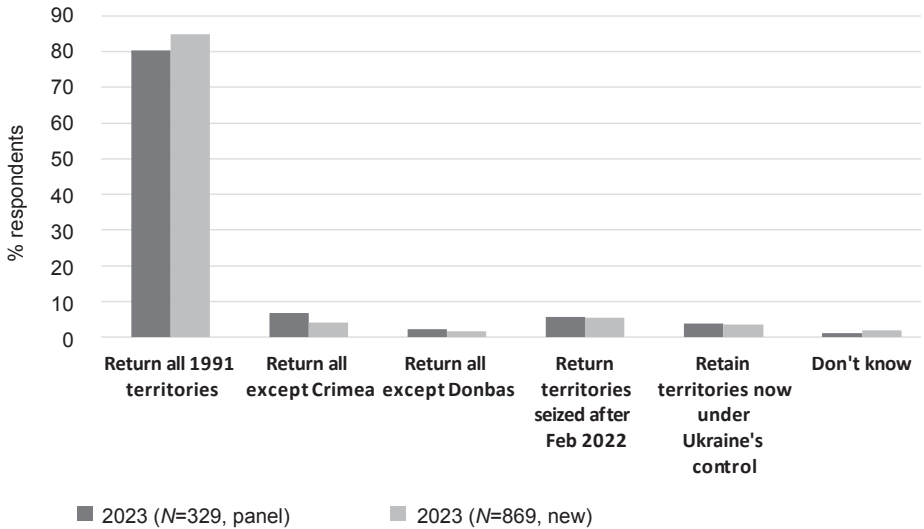


Figure 4. Regaining Territory Central to Victory

recognized borders. To a further 16 percent, victory meant returning at least some territories that have been occupied by Russia since 2014 and 2022. Only around four percent of respondents said they would accept keeping the territory Ukraine controlled at the time of the survey (Figure 4).

These findings are consistent with other reputable surveys in Ukraine.¹ Notably, preferences for regaining territory have been close to uniform across Ukraine's four macro-regions. Our larger 2023 poll (N=869) reveals that preference for getting all

¹ <https://www.ponarseurasia.org/victory-despite-the-cost-what-ukrainians-think-about-the-war-peace-and-russia/>

Russia-occupied territories under Ukraine's control was expressed by 84 percent respondents in the West, 86 percent in the Center, 82 percent in the East, and 87 percent in the South (all differences within the margin of the sampling error for regional subsample sizes).¹

Victory-in-Freedom Synergy

As we reported earlier, massive personal losses and suffering (Figure 2) have not dampened support for political freedoms in Ukraine (Figure 1). We undertook a more detailed statistical analysis to explore how and why democratic resilience among Ukrainians have endured. This analysis yielded two principal insights: (i) a clearer understanding of the importance of political freedoms and fighting for victory among individuals who experienced loss and trauma (thus indicating that a sense of shared sacrifice boosts the value of political freedoms in Ukraine) and (ii) a strong appreciation across Ukraine's society that victory is vital to preserve democracy (with the latter also increasingly seen as an intrinsic aspect of Ukraine's national identity). In combination, these insights point to what we term as a victory-in-freedom drive or a victory-freedom complex in Ukraine's society, a quintessential social basis of the Ukrainians' sustained, spirited resilience in the face Russia's mass savage invasion.

Illustrating the first insight is the 2021-2023 panel survey data tracking the same individuals ($N=329$). We compared mean support for democracy (based on the same question as in Figure 1) among respondents who reported some form of personal loss since 2014 and those who reported no personal loss in each year. Using the visual inference rule for error bars with 95-percent confidence (Cumming and Finch 2005), we see no statistically significant difference between democracy support by loss in any year and we also see a significantly higher level of democracy support after Russia's February 2022 invasion regardless of loss (as we reported earlier, indicating resilience).

However, the results also show that substantively democracy support somewhat declined between 2022 and 2023 among respondents who reported no personal loss, whereas among those who did it remained practically unchanged (Figure 5, comparing the middle and right-hand error bars for Yes and No categories). And while the decline is not formally significant at the 95-percent confidence level using the visual inference rules, the shorter error bars in the "Yes" category compared to the "No" category since 2022 indicate that respondents who suffered losses in the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion were less ambivalent in their backing of democracy than respondents who did not suffer losses. Among respondents who did not report personal losses the ambivalence increased from 2022 to 2023. In other words, people who suffered war come through as having greater clarity in supporting democracy for Ukraine and are less likely to waver.

¹ The West comprised respondents residing, by province (oblast), in Volyn, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Chernivtsi; the Center – in Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Kyiv (Oblast & City), Kirovohrad, Poltava, Sumy, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy, Chernihiv; the South – in Mykolaiv, Odesa, and Kherson; and the East – in Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts.

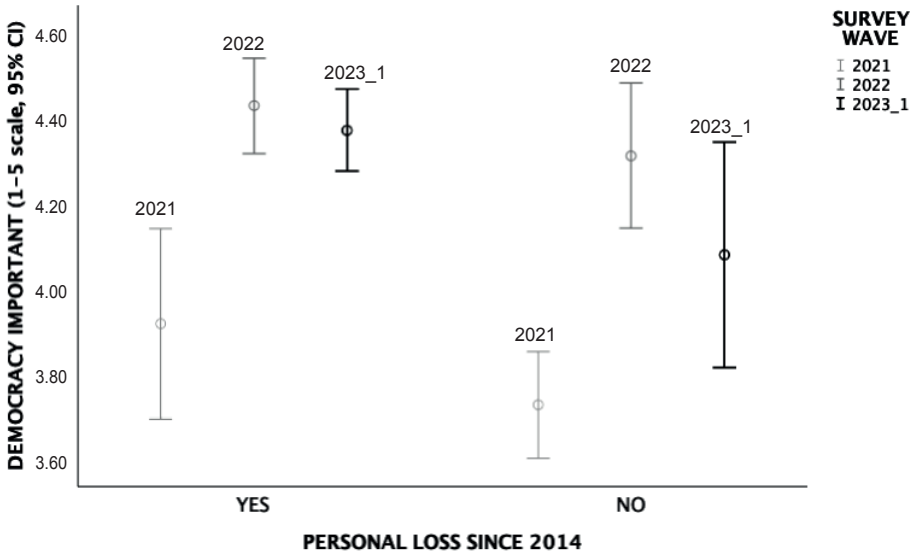


Figure 5. Democracy Support More Consistent Among Those Who Suffered War Loss

Our second insight—the linkage between democracy support and faith in victory—comes through in the analysis of the panel survey data using regression with a linear mixed model (LMM) in SPSS for three repeated measurements (2021, 2022, and 2023) on the same respondents. The model estimates pre/post (change-over-time) effects at the individual level by controlling for subject (respondent) as a factor in the model. Residuals are no longer estimated only as the distance between a data point and the average for all respondents (as in OLS models), but also as the distance between a data point and the mean for *that respondent* over time. We used this model to estimate predictors of democracy support controlling for both between- and within-subject effects.

Our principal explanatory variable of interest was war effects over time (WAR), represented by the survey year, and capturing putative effects of two distinct war phases: the Russian invasion and Ukraine’s initial response and pushback (Feb-Jul 2022) and a prolonged grinding war (Nov 2022 – Jun 2023). We ran two sets of regression tests. First, we included the survey data for all three years, which allows us to assess if the initial major changes in public views following Russia’s invasion endured through mid-2023. Second, we ran the tests with the data only for 2022 and 2023 to estimate changes in society in the most recent year that otherwise might not have been apparent given significant changes from 2021 to 2023.

Our dependent variables were democracy importance and free speech importance, trust in the media, parliament (Rada), and president (all on the 5-point Likert scale), as well as support for joining EU and NATO (on a 3-point Likert scale). We also controlled for the effects of war loss, trauma, prior-to-the-war consumption of news from Russia, Ukraine’s civic national identity, language use, region, age, income, and gender (entered in the model as independent variables).

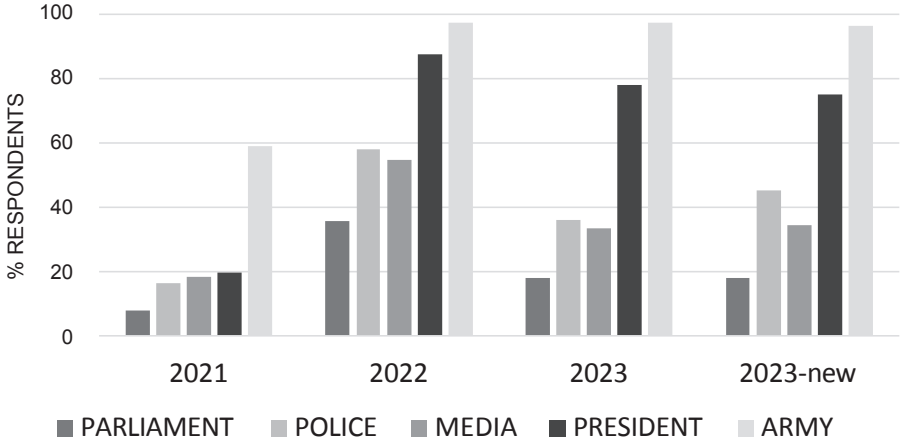


Figure 6. Wartime Trust in Government Slides but Stays Above 2021 Levels

Our first principal finding is that the initial surge of democracy support among Ukrainians in the face of Russia's invasion has been more than a short-term rallying-round-the-flag. Strong and positive WAR (time) effects on democracy support indicators endured from 2021 through 2023 (significant at 99.9-percent confidence level for all indicators, except for trust in Rada).

Related findings indicate that support for democratic ideals doesn't mean Ukrainians write a blank check of trust to their government. Notably, we found no statistically significant change in respondents' assessment of democracy importance and free speech importance from 2022 to 2023, as well as in their support for Ukraine joining NATO and the EU (i.e., the core international democratic coalition). Yet LMM analysis indicates that as the war progressed and hardship persisted respondents held their democratic institutions accountable: levels of trust in the media, Rada and the president declined about halfway to the 2021 levels (Figure 6) and those declines were statistically significant at the 99.9-percent confidence level.

This dichotomous continuation of public backing for democratic values and joining the international democratic coalitions while displaying a more critical stance toward domestic political institutions is an important indicator in its own right: it suggests the Ukrainian society has a strong capacity to push back against sliding into authoritarianism. And partly confirming our first insight, we found that in Ukraine's macro-regions more directly affected by the war—the East and Center—trust in institutions, notably the Rada, held up at approximately 2022 levels, while in the West trust in the Rada declined at statistically significant levels in 2023.

The second important finding in this regard in both the 2022 and 2023 waves of our panel survey—and notably confirmed in our larger June 2023 survey (N=869) analyzed with ordinary least squares (OLS) regression controlling for the same variables as above—is that Ukrainians who believed in Ukraine's war victory were more likely to see democracy as important than those who did not believe in war victory. The relationship was statistically significant at the 95-percent confidence level.

This is another, and more direct, indicator of what we termed as victory-in-freedom synergy. The OLS analysis of the same survey data also confirmed the trend in longitudinal findings showing that respondents who suffered war loss were more likely than others to consider democracy as a system of government and free speech as a value to be important to them personally (see the Table).

Table

Democracy and Institutional Support
(Ukraine, June 2023, N=869)

	<i>Democracy Important</i>	<i>Free Speech Important</i>	<i>Trust Media</i>	<i>Trust Rada</i>	<i>Trust President</i>	<i>Join EU</i>	<i>Join NATO</i>
AGE (Younger) (natural log)	*** .142 (.029)		*** .128 (.036)	* -.075 (.039)		* .032 (.017)	
Male			** -.207 (.073)		* -.149 (.072)		* .094 (.038)
Income							
Language Ukrainian			*** .336 (.105)			*** .189 (.049)	*** .213 (.054)
Trauma							
War Loss	*** .231 (.07)	** .224 (.084)					* .103 (.044)
Victory	* .147 (.061)		** .200 (.074)	* .155 (.081)	*** .585 (.074)	*** .216 (.035)	*** .254 (.039)
War Duration (longer)			*** -.151 (.043)	*** -.206 (.047)	*** -.187 (.043)	* -.048 (.020)	
Civic Identity							
WEST2021						** .111 (.038)	* .093 (.043)
CENTER2021							
EAST2021					* .212 (.098)		

Note: *** (p<.001), ** (p<.01), *(p<.05) corresponding, respectively, to 99.9, 99, and 95-percent confidence levels. Only statistically significant relationships are reported, blank otherwise.

Our focus group conversations provide valuable insights on why we find these relationships between loss, belief in victory and democracy support in statistical tests. Our interlocutors conveyed a strong message explaining Ukraine’s enduring democratic resilience: a deep sense of the massive scale of shared sacrifice from the Russian invasion and the cost of foregoing it exceeding the cost of warfighting in material and moral terms. Fundamentally, to focus group participants a prospect that Russia would not be expelled from the occupied territories was simply unthinkable and incomprehensible given Ukraine’s painful sacrifices in continuing defense against Russia’s efforts to stamp out Ukraine’s freedoms and national identity.

We derive these conclusions from the participants’ comments on the question: “To what extent do you believe public support for Zelenskyi will depend on the outcome of the war? What if the war does not end the way we expect it to end?” [In prior

discussions, the participants shared the overwhelming belief in Ukraine's victory and liberation of all occupied territories, reflecting our survey findings reported above]. Of the 24 participants who responded to the question, only nine gave specific answers. Most others were taken aback or surprised by the question's very premise indicating that they wouldn't see the war as being over unless Ukraine regains its international recognized territories. The prevailing mood came through in the following statements:

"Zelenskyi then will no longer be Zelenskyi. ... I will then demand that he takes up arms himself and fights to return Crimea, Donbas, and Luhansk." Dmytro, 18, Mykolaiv.

"Why, then, did our men die? For what have our boys been killed since 2014? What are the Alleys of Glory memorials for? What has everything been for?" Angela, 46, Mykolaiv.

"And for what did people die, then? For what did they lose their arms, legs, homes, property? For what? For what did a mother lose her son?" Natalia, 47, Lviv (displaced, originally from Mar'inika, Donetsk oblast).

"One person cannot win a war. And we all, the whole nation, are trying, helping every way we can. He, as president, does the right thing. So far, the right thing. Victory will be ours." Viacheslav, 70, Mykolaiv.

"Our president said that if we don't return our territories within 1991 borders, then it will not be victory, it will be capitulation. So the war will go on till we reach our borders. And that's it." Liudmyla, 50, Kyiv.

Our data also tells a related story of how under external aggression by an expansionist authoritarian state democracy becomes more strongly associated with the national identity, including its core characteristics such as language. In our longitudinal (LMM) regression tests, the Ukrainian language use (preference to speak it in a survey) came out as a highly significant predictor of all seven measures of democracy importance, trust in institutions, and EU and NATO membership for 2021-2023 (three survey waves) and of six out of seven measures for 2022-2023 (two survey waves). In the first pre/post war onset test, comparing the same respondents from November 2021 to June-July 2022 surveys, language use was only significantly related to support for NATO membership. Additionally, in 2022-2023 LMM tests, we found that Ukrainian civic identity undergirded trust in the president (i.e., respondents who named Ukrainian citizenship as their primary form of personal identity were more likely than others to trust the president).

Uncharted Time Effects: No Room for Complacency

Given lack of systematic individual-level empirical research on democracy support over time in states experiencing external invasion (i.e., cases like Ukraine), we don't have evidence that may give analysts clues as to how popular support for democracy in Ukraine may change as the war continues. So far, our findings indicate this support has been withstanding both the decline of trust in government institutions and a slight increase in uncertainty about Ukraine's war victory.

At the same time, our findings indicate potential areas to monitor and warns against complacency. Of particular concern is the scale of personal loss and trauma we have documented (Figure 2), and the literature is ambiguous on its effects. A well-established line of studies concludes that losses and trauma are detrimental to support for democratic values and rather boosts authoritarianism, as people seek a “strong hand” to restore their broken sense of personal invulnerability to death (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Rosenblatt, et al., 1989) or to forcefully respond to their anger at the perpetrators of violence (Chemtob, et al., 1997; Dyrstad, 2013; Canetti-Nisim, et al., 2009). Yet, other studies indicate people may adapt to violence and reset their political attitudes after initial shocks (Sniderman, et al., 2019), or they may become desensitized to repeated acts of violence and largely persist in their previously held views (Nussio, 2020), or they may even experience “posttraumatic growth” and develop stronger prodemocratic attitudes (Tedeschi, Calhoun, 2004), , including political tolerance (Carmil, Breznitz, 1991).

In addition to examining how loss and trauma relate to democracy support, we also checked whether they relate to respondents’ belief in Ukraine’s war victory. The comparison of means across survey waves with the same respondents ($N=329$) showed that respondents who experienced any form of loss or any form of trauma were no more or less likely to believe in Ukraine’s war victory—in other words, they kept their faith despite massive suffering. There was one notable exception worth special attention, including with respect to policy: people who had family members or relatives displaced in the war, going back to 2014, started to feel somewhat less confident in war victory in 2023 compared to 2022 (at 99-percent confidence, see Figure 7). Substantively this is still a small difference (about 0.2 on 1-4 scale, or about 7 percent) and it could

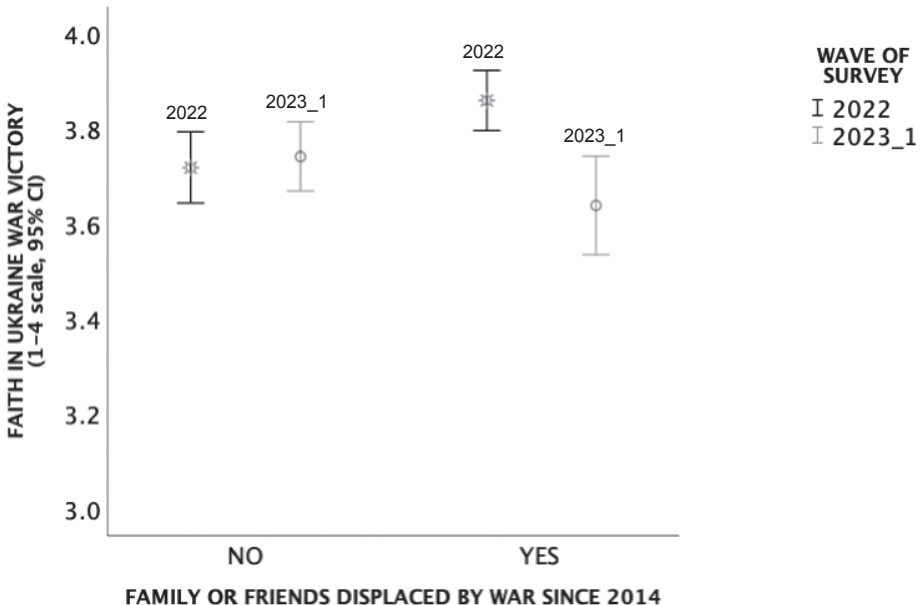


Figure 7. Families of displaced persons feel somewhat less confident in victory

be partially the result of the sampling error. Nevertheless, it is worth exploring further to see how this trend might be mitigated.

Another source of ambiguity concerns our finding showing that while belief in victory is positively related to trust in institutions, the assessment of war duration is negatively related to trust—and that both relationships are consistently statistically significant (see the results in the double-lined frame in the center of the Table). On the one hand, this finding may suggest that respondents who believed the war would last longer had less faith in the capacity of Ukrainian institutions to rise to the challenge and in Ukraine's EU membership prospects. On the other hand, it is also possible that respondents who felt their political institutions were trustworthy, and the EU could embrace Ukraine, felt the war would end sooner. One hopeful factor here is that only faith in victory, but not the perceived war duration (measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where "1" stands for "several weeks" and "5" stands for "over three years") had a statistically significant relationship with democracy importance. This means that just like we found Ukrainians committed to core democratic values while increasingly mistrusting their political institutions, we also find them remaining committed to these values even when they feel the war and, by extension, war-related suffering may last longer and in doing so weaken their institutions.

Also, our surveys point to the importance of media conditioning or long-term media effects at wartime. One troubling finding to monitor—and perhaps to make relevant policy conclusions—points to the long-term negative effects of Russian media. Consistent with prior empirical research linking the strength of Russian TV signals within Ukraine to support for pro-Russian political actors (Peisakhin, Rozenas, 2018), we find that respondents who listed Russia-based media as one of their two main news sources in November 2021 (7 percent of the sample) were less likely than others to view democracy as important and to support Ukraine's bid for the EU and NATO in mid-2023. The unstandardized regression coefficient shows that getting news from the Russian sources in 2021 dampened valuation of democracy importance in 2023 among the same people by about 15 percent; and reduced support for joining the EU and NATO by around 11 percent. All these effects were statistically significant at the 99.9-percent level. This was not the case among the same respondents in our June 2022 survey and it may indicate that long-term Russian media framing of issues regained its influence with some respondents after the first shocks of the invasion subsided, shaping their perceptions of the situation in Ukraine, or that the Russian media remains to be accessible despite the well-reasoned efforts by Ukraine's government, or both. (One hopeful sign, however, is that Russian media use in 2021 was not significantly associated with trust in political institutions and valuation of free speech importance).

Finally, in our longitudinal surveys we also see the re-emergence of economic conditions as a significant factor from 2022 to 2023, with higher family income level¹ predicting stronger support for free speech (though remaining neutral when it comes

¹ Based on the survey question: "What is the state of your family's material wellbeing in the last 2-3 months? (1 = 'we often have no money for food and sometimes beg;' 2 = 'we cannot buy enough food and sometimes skip meals;' 3 = 'we only have money for food;' 4 = 'we generally have enough to live on;' 5 = 'we have enough for most of our needs, but no savings;' 6 = 'we have enough for most of our needs and make savings;' and 7 = 'we completely satisfy all our needs'.")

to supporting democracy as a political system), trust in the president and EU membership. The lesson here is straightforward: maintaining economic well-being of ordinary Ukrainians at war time will be highly important for sustaining Ukraine's democratic and European aspirations. (Interestingly, the single-year cross-sectional 2023 survey test doesn't capture these effects, most likely because it only assesses the impact of various indicators compared to one another but not the effect of changes in respondents' views over time).

Conclusion and implications

Our findings contribute to the literature on war and democracy by showing the importance of considering both the external context (war duration and impacts and the aggressor state type) and the mobilization of national identity in the face of aggression, consistent with the "geosocietal" logic of democracy support (Alexseev, Dembitskyi, 2024). We find this synergy remarkably resilient, given the unimaginably devastating scale of war-induced suffering across Ukrainian society. At the same time, our study indicates that this resilience should not be cause for complacency. In particular, it would recommend Ukraine and its allies—in addition to providing military assistance to reduce losses and trauma—to pay more attention to countering Russian information warfare, improving the treatment of displaced persons, and ensuring that its economic policies translate into sustainable family incomes.

In terms of policy implications, our findings demonstrate loud and clear that Ukrainians would strongly oppose any offer of armistice, ceasefire or peace agreement that would entail the loss of territory to Russia. They also imply that if the United States and its allies' military and economic aid to Ukraine diminished, Ukrainians would keep on fighting.

Given the projected doubling of Russia's military expenditures over 2024, the Kremlin is clearly determined to push on with their mass invasion. In this clash of determinations—those of a dictatorial leader against a freedom-bound society—the real option will hardly be between war continuation and exchanging peace for territory, but rather between two types of war: one in which Ukraine is provided faster with more advanced and powerful military capabilities, increasing the likelihood of its forces pushing Russia out of the occupied territories possibly within a year, or one that turns into a grinding, bloodier slog with less Western assistance and reinvigorated Russian advances, likely lasting for years and spawning significant global turbulence—from enabling North Korea and China as well as Iran and its Middle Eastern proxies, including Hezbollah and Hamas, to challenge the US and its coalitions more boldly, to the resurgence of intergroup hostilities in the former Yugoslavia, to spiking instability and violence in Africa's coup-belt, particularly across the Sahel, to empowering Venezuela's dictator Maduro's militarized annexation of the neighboring Guyana territories, to greater Russian influence overall across Central and Latin America.

Given our findings and their implications, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyi's remark at the 2024 Munich Security Conference was right on point: "Do not ask Ukraine when the war will end. Ask yourself, why is Putin still able to continue it."¹

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-68330570>

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Victory-in-freedom: Ukraine's democratic resilience in the face of war

The article offers a rare systematic analysis of political attitudes in societies experiencing massive military invasions using statistical analysis of two original surveys conducted by the Ukraine National Academy of Sciences Institute of Sociology—a panel survey tracking the same respondents in three waves (N=329, November 2021, June–July 2022, and June 2023) and an additional larger survey (N=869, June 2023). Despite devastating suffering, Ukrainians' support for democracy as a political system and for freedom of speech have stayed remarkably resilient over this time period. Cross-sectional (multiple ordinary least squares regression) and longitudinal (linear mixed-effects model regression) tests, as well as supplementary focus group conversations in all of Ukraine's macro-regions, show that this democratic resilience is grounded in the victory-in-freedom synergy—a widespread sense of shared sacrifice that drives determination to win the war and restore Ukraine's territorial integrity.

In particular, we found a clearer understanding of the importance of political freedoms and fighting for victory among individuals who experienced loss and trauma and a strong appreciation across Ukraine's society that victory is vital to preserve democracy. Survey data also demonstrates that democracy support has become more intrinsic to Ukrainian national identity and that the initial surge of democracy support among Ukrainians in the face of Russia's invasion has been more than a short-term rallying-round-the-flag. In combination, these factors explain the Ukrainians' sustained, spirited resilience in the face of Russia's mass savage invasion over more than a two-year period. Moreover, support for democratic ideals doesn't mean Ukrainians write a blank check of trust to their government. Longitudinal analysis indicates that as the war progressed, and hardship persisted respondents held their democratic institutions accountable.

At the same time, the results of our study indicate that sustaining this resilience would require not only battlefield successes, but also accountable governance, countering Russia's media impacts, and sustaining family incomes. Our findings contribute to the literature on war and democracy by showing the importance of considering both the external context (war duration and impacts and the aggressor state type) and the mobilization of national identity in the face of aggression.

Keywords: Ukraine; public opinion; democracy; war; national identity

МИХАЙЛО АЛЕКСЕЄВ, СЕРГІЙ ДЕМБІЦЬКИЙ

Перемога-у-свободі: демократична стійкість України перед обличчям війни

У статті пропонується унікальний систематичний аналіз політичних настроїв у суспільствах, які переживають повномасштабне військове вторгнення. Висновки роботи базуються на результатах статистичного аналізу двох оригінальних опитувань, проведених Інсти-

тутом соціології Національної академії наук України: 1) панельного опитування, в якому відстежувалися ті самі респонденти (три хвили — $N = 329$, листопад 2021 року, червень–липень 2022 року та червень 2023 року); 2) додаткового крос-секційного опитування ($N = 869$, червень 2023 року). Незважаючи на неймовірні втрати та труднощі, підтримка українцями демократії як політичної системи та свободи слова залишалася надзвичайно стійкою впродовж періоду, коли проводилися опитування. Перехресні та лонгітюдні регресійні тести, а також додаткові фокус-групові обговорення з представниками усіх макрорегіонів України показали, що така демократична стійкість ґрунтується на феномені «перемоги-у-свободі» — надзвичайно поширеному відчутті спільної жертвовності, яка спонукає до рішучості виграти війну й відновити територіальну цілісність України. Дані опитувань також свідчать про те, що українці більше відчують, що демократія є невіддільною частиною української національної ідентичності. Водночас результати показують, що для підтримки такої стійкості потрібні не тільки успіхи на полі бою, а й підвільне управління, протидія впливу ЗМІ Росії та збереження необхідного рівня сімейних доходів. Висновки запропонованого дослідження є внеском у наукову літературу про війну та демократію. Вони доводять важливість розгляду як зовнішнього контексту (тривалість війни, її впливи та тип держави-агресора), так і мобілізації національної ідентичності перед лицем агресії.

Ключові слова: Україна; громадська думка; демократія; війна; національна ідентичність