
GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION AS A SIGN OF THE SUSTAINABILITY OF UKRAINIAN CIVIL SOCIETY DURING AND AFTER THE WAR WITH RUSSIA

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Abstract. *This article is devoted to researching the complex interactions between a society's efforts to approach best practices of social inclusion and gender equality implementation in policy development processes and the ability of such a society to maintain its commitment to liberal and human-centered values in political life. Using the methods of stylized facts and comparative politics, we ground the applicability of the two-stage model of acquiring the institutional capacity to implement the principles of gender equality and social inclusion in the activities of the authorities. The first stage of this model involves the ability to accumulate additional costs to take into account and meet the special needs of vulnerable and discriminated-against groups in the process of policy development and implementation. The second stage entails the ability to achieve the efficiency of such expenditures in order to extract social outcomes through the reduction in the number of marginalized groups and the expansion of participation in the functioning of civil society institutions, ensuring the broad representation of all socio-demographic strata of the population. The stylized facts collected in this article may be the first (and are certainly not comprehensive) evidence that Ukraine is at the stage of forming the capability within society to benefit from the implementation of the principles of gender equality and social inclusion, both at the nationwide level and the level of individual organizations.*

Keywords: *gender equality; social inclusion; policy development; social outcomes; resilience.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *lyčių lygybė; socialinė įtrauktis; politikos formavimas; socialiniai rezultatai; atsparumas.*

Introduction

The tragic events of the most destructive war in Europe since the middle of the 20th century have actualized the problem of adapting the theoretical foundations and implementation of state policy development to the needs of countries that seek to ensure the sustainable functioning of civil society institutions and the protection of liberal values. This is particularly acute when bordering the totalitarian regime of modern Russia and being in the direct zone of influence of Russian imperial ambitions, as modern Ukraine is. Therefore, we consider it extremely important to identify the fundamental differences in the principles and procedures of collective action (particularly concerning embedding gender equality and social inclusion) between Russia and Ukraine. This may contribute to explaining the utterly irreconcilable positions of not only the ruling elite, but also the wider strata of the two populations, along with the extremely high stability of Ukrainians in their adherence to liberal-democratic values even under pressure of a year of total destruction and victimhood caused by the Russian invasion. The fundamental questions for the author are: What are the advantages of gender equality and social inclusion for a society during war and during the post-war reconstruction stage? In what forms do these advantages manifest (that are applicable for quantitative or qualitative analysis) during a confrontation between two societies – not only on the battlefield, but also in the realm of preserving the ability for the effective interaction between state bodies and the public?

Literature review

In the author's opinion, the most productive theoretical basis for answering these questions is the classification of social models that emphasize the institutions which regulate the access of economic and political market actors (generally referring to market interaction as competition in the conditions of scarcity of goods) to resources and institutional possibilities that guarantee them exclusive status and reduce the intensity of their competitive struggles (North et al. 2009; Williamson 1998). A society's capacity to ensure unceasing competition on political and economic markets, which allows every actor to obtain an exclusive position only as a result of successful innovative activity and increases the efficiency of the usage of resources to meet the needs of the population, leads to a range of possible development trajectories: a society of open access order, as proposed by D. North; a society with a prevalence of inclusive institutions, as proposed by D. Acemoglu; or the "open society" of Popper (1969). A range of historical trends can also lead to the concentration of economic and political power in the society, undermining the competitiveness of political and economic markets and suggesting another development trajectory – a society of limited access, with the prevalence of extractive institutions where incentives for innovative activity are suppressed by mechanisms for extracting administrative rent.

We assume that resource provision and implementing the principles of gender equality and social inclusion are embedded as important political components of ensuring the sustainability of a human-centered society. However, maintaining this sustainability during wartime requires that we strengthen the observance of the gender equality and social inclusion principles as a response to the challenges of increasing traditionalism and the influence of groups resorting to advocacy of violence in conditions of war (Wilén 2022).

A similar view can be seen in many publications on gender issues that are united by a common vision of gender equality as an important component of the effective functioning of a liberal democracy. For example, empirical confirmation of the hypothesis that a positive relationship exists between the share of women in school enrollment and tertiary education and a country's rank in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) was obtained by Baktybayev (2020). Moreover, Ferdous and Islam (2021) emphasize that for developing countries with weak institutional capacities, the conflict between the forces of democratization, who advocate for inclusion and gender equality, and supporters of conservative-traditionalist ideology, which seek to oppose the strengthening of women and other vulnerable groups, acquires special importance.

The aforementioned study also emphasizes the complementarity between achievements for society in terms of gender equality and the transparency of government actions. Chiva (2023) may serve as another example of the importance of gender equality, with their study exploring the conditions (framing and training) that allow political actors to effectively counter attempts to legitimize gender discrimination. In further papers focused on the conditions for the formation of an anti-gender coalition of political forces, it is noted that anti-gender topics are widely used as a means of mobilizing and combining the forces of radical traditionalist views (Norocel and Pettersson 2023; Bastian and Luckham 2003; Aggestam and Holmgren 2022).

The theoretical basis of this paper involves taking into account the complex challenges faced by the institutions tasked with ensuring gender equality and social inclusion in the conditions of war, as well as the important possibilities that emerge during this period.

These challenges are firmly in the focus of feminist scholars, with an underlying notion which assumes that the organic nature of social life makes it impossible to establish reliable limits between “legitimate violence” in war and “illegitimate” violence outside the battlefield (Ferris-Rotman 2018; Swaine 2010). The expansion of the usage of violence transforms society's system of dimensions, at first by increasing the influence of those groups that rely on violence as a profession (Goldstein 2001; Swaine 2010, Cockburn and Zarkov 2002). Secondly, additional pressure may be placed on the achievements of women's movements in the post-war period via the strengthening of the advocacy of violence, as a component of militaristic ideology which leads to the softening of the reaction of society to the ordinary violence which women experience in the private sphere (Swaine 2010).

Moreover, society faces increasing pressure being placed on the principle of the equality of all under the law by the new wartime elite, and the justification of the shifting of the

burden of wartime and reconstruction efforts to those groups of the population that are seen as less important for solving military tasks – in particular, women (Goldstein 2001). As a result, this concept postulates the thesis of a continuum of violence, which posits that the violence women experience in the private sphere is perceived as ordinary, and as such is tolerated, while the violence occurring on battlefield is understood as extraordinary. The latter acquires primary importance, so ordinary violence against women is overlooked (Swaine 2010).

As an additional factor, it may be considered that male prevalence in both the spheres of international relations and society faces the strengthening of the influence of traditionally male spheres of activity in public life (Afshar 2003): the view spread in the literature defines war and post-war periods as those “where ‘fraternities’ – both national and international – compete over power” (Handrahan 2004, 433).

At the same time, historical experience points to the fact that the overemployment of men in the field of direct military operations and the acute shortage of labor opens up new opportunities for women (which does not in itself guarantee significant improvements in their wellbeing – rather, it only increases in their employment outside the home). As a result, however, the growth in demand for services that release women from domestic work may not be fully met, and the burden on women who combine professional and family activities may outweigh the benefits of obtaining a paid job (True 2012).

Therefore, gender integration initiatives give many women access to normal social interaction, encourage them not to lose motivation, prevent them from suffering irreparable losses in terms of their health, knowledge, and skills, enable them to be aware of the opportunities provided by different organizations that manage the available resources in society, support their social mobility and their ability to remain an integral part of society, and help them to participate in solving actual problems that benefit from their contribution (Hassnain et al. 2021; Vedung 1997).

The publications referenced above share a common approach in comparing established systems of institutions that have achieved integrity, resulting in a certain model of social interaction that has become ingrained and self-replicating. However, there is a gap in understanding the specific transformation process – particularly in the context of Russia and Ukraine, where the two societies have diverged in terms of inclusion and gender equality in both policy development and implementation. To fill this gap, this article introduces a range of stylized facts which may provide evidence of the notion that the integration of social inclusion and gender equality into policy development and implementation contributes to the formation of the “open access” and “inclusive institutions” social models and brings further advantages, even in wartime conditions.

Accordingly, this article aims to develop an argument for the thesis that the integration of social inclusion and gender equality into policy development and implementation contributes to society’s resistance in the conditions of war.

Stylized facts illustrating the formation of the capacity of Ukrainian society to gain

benefits through the implementation of gender equality and social inclusion

In an operational study of the gender sensitivity of social support in Ukraine during wartime conducted by the Poruch NGO (2023), a significant correlation was found between the duration of the residence of a household (family) in territory where evacuation was highly recommended (under shelling, lacking communal services and transport connections, with permanent risk even during attempts to satisfy basic needs) and the complexity of the problems faced by members of the household after changing their place of residence. Those who stayed under fire longer, especially those who had already left Ukrainian territory that had been lost, were much more likely to be completely dependent on social support and had no self-sufficient sources of living. These individuals were also much more prone to problems in their interaction with state bodies, and showed much lower levels of satisfaction with attempts to restore their social activity. In turn, majority female households stayed in dangerous territories for longer and refused (or had no opportunity) to follow the evacuation recommendations. Therefore, it can be expected that taking gender aspects into account in the process of developing and implementing evacuation and support programs for internally displaced people (IDPs) can significantly increase the mobility of the population, reduce the proportion of households with prolonged (problematic) waiting periods before leaving dangerous territory, and, accordingly, reduce the costs involved in the rehabilitation and return of IDPs to normal social activity. This activity can also reduce losses caused by increases in the number of disappointed individuals who reject career growth plans and measures to prevent the development of chronic diseases.

This capacity to gain benefit through the improvement of human development, albeit at additional expense (since gender sensitivity requires more complex planning, control, and reporting procedures for the planning and implementation of state programs, additional expenditure items in budget spending, etc.), fundamentally distinguishes not only between the institutional support and ideological institutions of state policy in Ukraine and Russia, but also between the two societies, expressing the radical divergence of two different trajectories of social development.

In Russia, the attitude towards people and towards the principles of organizing the interaction of a citizen with the institutions that develop and implement state policy is completely different. This attitude towards people views them as a resource which, in economic terms, is present in relative abundance. The human potential of the population for state policy in Russia is a standard resource, all units of which are relatively easily replaceable, and the additional costs that emerge when taking into account the special needs of certain target groups are not encouraged. This principle is manifested in all fields, and particularly in the military area. The tactics of the occupying army involve an economy that features various components of military operations, including incentives for the economy of financial resources, military equipment, and ammunition, but not people: the expenditure of this resource is not viewed as excessive or undesirable a priori (Snyder 2022).

In all other spheres of social interaction, institutions enabling actors to incur additional

costs to increase sensitivity and differentiation according to the needs of different segments of the population are not integrated within state policy. This causes the gradual accumulation of a critical number of impossibilities for state policy when it comes to responding to the needs and preferences of certain groups of the population. It thus becomes increasingly difficult to become a beneficiary, and the tools for assessing the social results of policy become more formal and less related to the real needs of the population (Acemoglu and Robinson 2009).

The results of another research project managed by the Poruch NGO (Poruch and USAID 2021) may be considered as another stylized fact that illustrates the formation of the possibility of gaining benefits through the implementation of gender equality and social inclusion. The widely known bonding and selection models (Lazear 1981; Salop and Salop 1976), in the context of strategic decisions on investing in human capital, explain the notion that employers will consider women of fertile age less inclined towards permanent employment and instead prefer to hire men for those jobs that involve highly specialized training. The idea that women of fertile age are more prone to shifts in working life and thus prefer to invest in universal skills (which retain their value in the event of a change of workplace) rather than in special skills (focused on a specific enterprise) can find empirical confirmation in the different returns to tenure for women and men: “lower returns to tenure for women could be due to employer discrimination based on rational expectations about women’s attachment to jobs. For example, if employers engage in statistical discrimination then the perception of women as ‘less’ stable workers could lead employers to systematically not hire women into jobs with opportunities of specific training or learning” (Munasinghe et al. 2008, 1297).

In particular, despite the fact that in developed countries women minimized the educational gap in the 1980s and have had an educational level higher than average since the beginning of the 21st century (OECD 2012), they are much less commonly represented in technical and engineering professions than men (ILO 2018). A similar situation is evident in Ukraine, where women have a higher educational level than men but the engineering and technical professions remain traditionally male (State Statistics Service of Ukraine 2019).

However, the results of a sample survey conducted by the Poruch NGO among the employees of energy enterprises in Ukraine (Poruch and USAID 2021) revealed that differences in the intensity of the participation of men and women in corporate personnel training programs are relatively small (a higher frequency of training of men was recorded, but their advantage remains within the limits of systematic sampling error). In addition, differences between the indicators of women and men who are employed in positions at the same level of the professional and qualification hierarchy almost disappear. Accordingly, since the intensity of training increases slightly with the increase in the professional qualification level of jobs, the difference between men and women is fully explained by the increase in the representation of men (and the decrease in the specific weight of women) as the professional

qualification level of jobs increases. Therefore, it was possible to ensure the almost equal access of women and men to opportunities to accumulate human capital in the process of professional training and professional development at energy enterprises in Ukraine.

At the same time, according to other research carried out by the Poruch NGO (2023), those respondents who were employed in the energy sector (even those who were forced to change their place of residence after the start of the war) did not lose their jobs, kept their incomes, and did not find themselves completely dependent on various forms of social assistance. Accordingly, we observe the example of establishing a connection between the additional costs that energy companies incurred in the pre-war period to ensure the access of women who combine family responsibilities with the realization of professional development plans and the saving of budget and donor resources, due to the reduction of the need for social and humanitarian help. This form of connection (where the centers of cost formation and benefit extraction are separated, respectively, the motivation to spend resources on ensuring gender equality and social inclusion is weak, and the load on the relevant institutional capacity of organizations is increasing) is considered as the most difficult to spread in society. Thus, the example of establishing such a connection is especially demonstrative.

At the level of the research of certain organizations, the sample of evidence in favor of social gains through the implementation of gender equality may be represented by the results of the survey of energy company employees conducted by experts of the Poruch NGO (2023). A statistically significant relationship was found between gender policy implementation (assessed by a set of formal features and the representation of women in the management bodies of companies) and the loyalty of the personnel to the companies (assessed by staff turnover indicators). Companies that have more actively integrated the principles of gender equality into the activities of personnel services appear to enjoy significantly greater commitment of their personnel, and this dependence is more pronounced in relation to groups of employees with relatively high qualification levels (Poruch 2023).

This case may illustrate the possibility for forming commercial incentives for expanding resource provision for ensuring gender equality and social inclusion – at least in the sector of large energy companies. In a more general sense, the positive connection between technological and social progress, in particular in the form of growing the share of high qualification labor demand and decreasing the gender gap in employment level and wage size, is in the focus of a wide array of literature – for example, Munasinghe et al. (2008), Kamborov and Manovskii (2005), and Rotman and Mandel (2023). Moreover, the establishment of such a connection in war conditions may be the prospective subject of further research in the context of embedding gender equality and social inclusion in the economic preconditions of the sustainability of the liberal-democratic order in post-soviet countries.

All of the above serves to justify the existence of a potential opportunity for Ukraine to receive benefits regarding the stability of society in war conditions, the pace of post-war recovery and development through the integration of the principles of gender equality and

social inclusion in the institutions of development and implementation of state policy, as well as Ukraine's ability to use this potential.

The idea of "the reevaluation of human life in the ideology of modern Western civilization"¹ is echoed by Russian propagandists in the media and appears in the statements of the country's top leadership.² For example, the Russian president striving to establish a law that decriminalized domestic violence in 2017 (Ferris-Rotman 2018) is a form of the manifestation of the general model of social interaction which is imposed on society by the Russian authorities regarding gender relations and social inclusion.

In Ukraine, even in the face of extreme shortages of financial resources, attempts are still being made to avoid affecting social orientation programs and to continue to foster liberal policy priorities with real resource and institutional support (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 2020).

The same applies to Ukrainian society's continued rejection of the imperial political tradition, with the fact that the country exists on the former outskirts of a multinational empire as an insufficient explanation of such radical divergence. In contrast, the worst practices of concentrating power, widely associated with various forms of social discrimination, are widely applied by the national governments of many post-colonial countries (Acemoglu and Robinson 2009).

Similar examples of disregard for the value of human life in the process of building a national system of policy-making and policy implementation institutions inherited from the political tradition of the former USSR are provided by many countries that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet empire (Fukuyama 2022).

However, the absence of imperial ambitions in the ideology shared among both the political elite and the population is believed to facilitate Ukraine in its endeavor to build a system of political institutions with a high capacity for organic interaction with European national and regional political institutions. The successes of Ukraine in its integration into the European political system (which actually triggered the escalation of the situation in 2014) can be attributed to significant elements of the current conflict.

The author believes that the roots of the current irreconcilable divisions between Ukrainian and Russian social and political life can be identified in the period of modern Ukrainian history. The particularity of this period in Ukrainian history (featuring the significantly higher competitiveness of political markets, higher diversification of the industrial structure of the economy and a lower level of state influence on its productive capacities, a larger proportion of small and medium businesses, and more intense interaction with European and North Atlantic political structures, which enhanced the national liberal-democratic tradition) explains the radical contradictions that leave no room for compromise between the two countries. The readiness of Ukrainian society to offer resistance to the challenges posed to gender equality by the war (Chinkin et al. 2020) may be considered

1 The speech broadcast on January 2, 2023, on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/@soloviev_live).

2 Putin's speech at the meeting with mothers of Russian soldiers, broadcast on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QArFuTzeY8A>).

as an immanent feature of the Ukrainian route towards social and political development.

The short period in which these qualitative distinctions were formed (with Ukraine having experienced only 30 years of independence) does not necessitate a lack of consolidation of the corresponding priorities and values in Ukrainian society. Attempts by Russia to appeal to “traditional” attitudes in Ukrainian society, which have repeatedly been part of a psychological information war against Ukrainian sovereignty, have never found significant support, neither among the local elite (except for in the case of activities directly affiliated with Russian ruling structures and agents of influence) nor among the majority of the population.

Researchers have identified at least three large-scale anti-gender information campaigns commissioned by Russian agents: “The first stage was implemented in 2010 – 2013, the second stage took place at the end of 2015 (beginning of 2016) – 2018, the third stage is ongoing since the end of 2018 to the present time” (Levchenko 2019, 85). At all stages, an important narrative spread within these psychological information operations was the thesis of “the destruction of national integrity of the Ukrainian people; attributing, mainly, to the European and American experience, a significant spectrum of social negative; demonization of certain social phenomena, initiated and spread from abroad” (Levchenko 2019, 185).

However, the high adaptability of modern Ukrainian society to liberal values, the natural development and implementation of state policies in Ukraine that foster the principles of the priority of human rights and international practices for their protection in social and political life, the moderation of public opinion, and the broad adoption of liberal-democratic values among a wide strata of the population have all allowed informational and psychological influence to be reliably resisted. These factors have also allowed high rates of integration of the principles of gender equality and social inclusion to be maintained in the activities of state institutions and local self-government bodies in Ukraine.

Even in communities that have directly suffered from hostilities and in which conditions for radicalization have been formed, the rejection of social inclusion principles has been successfully covered by a dense network of social inclusion and solidarity hubs. The experience gained by the Poruch NGO in the process of participating in the implementation of the “Support for the Cohesion and Development of the Communities Affected by the Conflict in Donbas” project under the International Organization for Migration reinforces this thesis: more than a thousand representatives of 20 territorial communities did not dissolve after training in a “neutral” environment on the principles of social solidarity, but instead became hubs for activating internal, local initiatives.

Conclusions

1. The readiness to form resource and institutional support for the flexibility and adaptability of authorities and their sensitivity to the needs, preferences and, in particular, gender identity of individuals both reflect the real rooting of human-centric principles in social life and form an indelible gap between Russia and Ukraine, expressing fundamental differences in the trajectory of social and political development in these countries. Accordingly, the level of attention to and the dynamics of resource provision devoted to the strengthening of gender sensitivity and social inclusion may be considered an important indicator for the evaluation of the resistance of Ukrainian society to the pressures of war as it approaches the model of a human-centered society. This can be presented as a two-stage model of acquiring the institutional capacity to implement the principles of gender equality and social inclusion: the first stage involves the ability to accumulate additional costs to take into account and meet the special needs of certain groups of beneficiaries in the process of policy development and implementation. The second is the ability to achieve the efficiency of such expenditures, to extract benefits from the reduction in the number of marginalized groups and the expansion of participation in the functioning of civil society institutions, ensuring the broad representation of all socio-demographic strata of the population.
2. The institutes of policy development and implementation for human-centered societies naturally evolve towards a higher level of differentiation, increased flexibility, and enhanced sensitivity to the needs of specific socio-demographic groups, creating real motivation and resource provision to meet the needs of groups which often do not benefit equally (or are greatly disadvantaged) from policy implementation. It is in this context that the integration of gender policies into institutional governance becomes an organic component of social development. The social benefit of integrating principles of gender equality and social inclusion into the institutions of policy development and implementation is reflected in Ukraine's increased ability "not to lose people." This term encompasses not only losses on the front line or from the barbaric bombardment of our territory (although ultimately this purpose may be strengthened as well), but also losses that are possible even within the territory that we control, such as those caused by lack of access to participation in state programs for particular segments of the population, the failure to provide timely social or humanitarian assistance, or the disregard for the additional conditions that need to be created for aid to be effective.
3. The roots of the current irreconcilable divisions between Ukrainian and Russian social and political life must be identified within the period of modern Ukrainian history. The particularity of this period in Ukrainian history (i.e., significantly higher competitiveness of political markets, higher diversification of the industrial

structure of the economy and a lower level of state influence on its productive capacities, a larger proportion of small and medium businesses, substantially more intense interaction with European and North Atlantic political structures, enhancing the domestic liberal-democratic tradition) explains the radical contradictions that leave no room for compromise between the two countries. The readiness of Ukrainian society to spend resources on achieving higher levels of flexibility and adaptability within state institutions, improving their sensitivity to the needs, preferences and, in particular, gender identity of individuals may be considered an immanent feature of the Ukrainian path towards social and political development and a values-based cause of the irreconcilable differences between the Ukrainian and Russian political spheres.

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LYČIŲ LYGYBĖ IR SOCIALINĖ ĮTRAUKTIS KAIP UKRAINOS PILIETINĖS VISUOMENĖS TVARUMO ŽENKLAS KARO PRIEŠ RUSIJĄ METU IR PO KARO

Straipsnis skirtas kompleksinei sąveikai tarp visuomenės pastangų priartėti prie kokybiškos socialinės įtraukties ir lyčių lygybės įgyvendinimo politikos formavimo, tokios visuomenės gebėjimo išlaikyti įsipareigojimą liberalioms ir į žmogų orientuotoms politinėms vertybėms. Pritaikius stilizuotų faktų ir lyginamosios politikos metodus, pagrįstas dviejų etapų institucinių gebėjimų įgijimo modelio pritaikomumas lyčių lygybės ir socialinės įtraukties principams įgyvendinti valdžios institucijų veikloje. Pirmasis etapas apima galimybę kaupti papildomas išlaidas siekiant atsižvelgti į specialius pažeidžiamų ir diskriminuojamų grupių poreikius ir juos tenkinti politikos kūrimo ir įgyvendinimo procese. Antroji – galimybė pasiekti tokių išlaidų efektyvumą, išgauti socialinius rezultatus mažinant marginalizuotų grupių skaičių ir plečiant dalyvavimą pilietinės visuomenės institucijų veikloje, siekiant užtikrinti platų visų socialinių ir demografinių sluoksnių gyventojų atstovavimą. Straipsnyje surinkti „stilizuoti faktai“ gali būti pirmasis (tikrai nepakankamas) įrodymas, kad Ukrainoje formuojasi visuomenė (kaip tam tikra organizacija), remianti lyčių lygybės ir socialinės įtraukties principų įgyvendinimą visos šalies mastu.

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