

## MILITARY VOLUNTEERING AS A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE AND ETHICAL PRACTICE

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**Abstract.** The article aims to analyse the volunteer movement in Ukraine since the beginning of the war launched by the Russian Federation against the sovereign state. During this difficult time, volunteers have taken responsibility for providing our defenders with everything they need (food, water, medicine, first-aid kits, uniforms, weapons, etc.). The volunteer movement has turned out to be a condition for the consolidation of the nation, and its participants have become the bearers of national self-consciousness and those moral principles that underlie the liberation war. The article reveals a special feature of the volunteer movement in Ukraine – its military nature and the maximum involvement of all segments of the population, representatives of different ages, and social groups in it. The key notional aspects of military volunteering are defined. Communicative practices of this type of volunteering are clearly horizontal; their basis is equality, respect for others, cooperation, adequate competition, freedom and responsibility, and creativity. The horizontal system of relations encourages the formation and development of autonomous and responsible individuals who do not appeal to authorities but are themselves the initiators of changes. As a result of the critical analysis, the contradictory nature of the volunteer movement has been noted. Despair and hope, law and morality, freedom and responsibility, the drama of human existence, and the desire to Be (to Live) – these are the inner problems and choices that volunteers face. The volunteer movement is a powerful existential experience for its participants. Its main purpose is not only to protect the country, but also the birth of a nation, the formation of national self-consciousness, understanding and acceptance of basic moral values and ideals, and to build a democratic country based on the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice.

**Keywords:** volunteering, war, existential experience, duty, freedom, national self-consciousness

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## 1. Introduction

In February 2022, Ukraine became a victim of an insidious attack by the Russian Federation. Before the war, the socio-political and economic situation in Ukraine was quite difficult. The country could hardly be called unified; it was being torn apart by internal contradictions; government reforms did not always attract popular support; the unemployment rate was increasing; the country was in the state of a frozen military conflict with Russia (ATO). However, the war changed the spiritual atmosphere in society. The Ukrainian people were so stunned by Russia's injustice and cruelty that they joined forces almost instantly to fight the aggressor. *'There is no evil that does not work out for good'* – a good Ukrainian proverb that clearly describes what happened in people's minds. Those who used to hold different views, including political ones, forgot about their conflicts and united their efforts. Moreover, it is worth noting that this unification of people happened rather spontaneously, and not thanks to the efforts of the authorities. A large number of volunteer organisations, both official and unofficial, emerged on this wave. Each caring person tried to help our defenders on their own. People were gathering, raising funds, buying, and sending aid to the army directly to the front (zero) positions. Ukraine has probably never known such solidarity. If earlier the phrase *'I am a Ukrainian'* was very often formal, now there has been a reconsidering of who each of us is. We have got a clear understanding of what we are fighting for, against whom, in what country we would like to live, and what values we are defending. The cost of war has made people ask and rethink these questions. Standing up for our freedom has run the process of the revival of the Ukrainian nation. Unfortunately, history knows no other way.

Volunteering as a unique phenomenon in Ukraine during the full-scale invasion of Russia on February 24, 2022, and throughout the entire period of the war has not yet been studied and analysed enough. Its uniqueness lies primarily in the fact that the war, as an accentuated spiritual state of society, has led to various manifestations of mass patriotism and national struggle, one of which is volunteering in all its possible manifestations. That is, volunteering has become a powerful mass movement covering, with no exception, all categories and layers of the population with a dominant militarized vector. Volunteers have become a special element of society in Ukraine, quickly and effectively solving a huge range of issues, be it assistance to forcibly displaced citizens of Ukraine or purchase and delivery of various types of weapons, ammunition, and food to the front. We would like to repeat that the key feature of the volunteer movement in Ukraine today is that it is a military volunteer movement. Volunteers do not just support the army, but they have taken on a very large part of providing it with the necessities. Food, uniforms, hygiene products, first aid kits, medicine for doctors, hospital supplies, thermal imaging cameras, drones, rangefinders, scopes and silencers, bulletproof vests, plate carriers, cars, tools, and fuel – these are just some of the requests that volunteers receive every day! They actually deliver this aid by themselves, risking their own lives. Therefore, we can say with full confidence that the participants in the volunteer movement in Ukraine are participants in combat operations (Titok 2022).

## **2. Characteristics of the volunteer movement in Ukraine after the invasion of the Russian Federation**

If we proceed from the most common definition, then volunteering is understood as a form of charity that is carried out voluntarily, selflessly, and consciously by individuals, expressed through the personal providing of works and services, based on the principles of legality, humanity, transparency, equality and is carried out to achieve socially significant goals. Volunteers are usually seen as people who give their time, energy, and expertise to help those in need without expecting any benefit (financial, material, etc.) in return.

In 2011, the Law of Ukraine ‘On Volunteering’ (dated April 19, 2011) became the fundamental legal act, according to which volunteering is a voluntary, socially oriented non-profit activity carried out by volunteers by providing volunteer assistance. The Law of Ukraine ‘On Volunteering’ dated 19.04.2011 (The Law of Ukraine ‘On Volunteering’ 2011) determines that volunteer activity is based on the principles of legality, humanity, equality, voluntariness, gratuitousness, non-profitability.

However, when analysing the manifestations and implementations of volunteer activities in the conditions of the war in Ukraine, we would like to outline the deeper aspects of the essence of volunteering (specifically, in our situation, this is military volunteering). Therefore, military volunteering can be interpreted as:

- a dialogue and mutual enrichment (volunteers need to communicate with a large number of people from different layers of society, in different emotional and psychological states, with different needs and opportunities, etc., and this, in turn, expands the perspective of seeing a situation and perception, understanding and acceptance of the Other);
- compassion for the Other and overcoming alienation (when unknown soldiers at the front or people who lost their homes due to an airstrike are perceived as near and dear ones and evoke a range of positive feelings);
- a condition of survival during the war;
- a creative approach to solving non-standard problems and situations;
- a personal quality of a person with high moral culture;
- a form of interstate, intercultural, interreligious, interethnic interactions (this includes cooperation with foreign partners, volunteers, and the diaspora);
- a unique existential experience (which put a huge number of people in extreme situations and circumstances that have arisen suddenly and changed a person’s inner world. Heidegger (Heidegger 1962) presents this experience through two modes of existence: forgetfulness of being (*Seinsvergessenheit*) and awareness of being (*Dasein*). Forgetfulness (or oblivion) of being is ordinary life in a daily environment, while awareness of being (or ‘being there’) is what a person comes to through certain situations, choices, and crises, defines oneself in the world, realises their responsibility for being);

- the ontology of transitivity in the form of caring for the Other (can be traced in the form of transitions from ignorance to knowledge, from the lack of ability to manage oneself and others to the emergence of this ability, from irresponsibility to responsibility, from indifference to empathy and compassion).

We can also present the differences between ordinary volunteering and military volunteering in the form of a comparative table (Table 1).

**Table 1. Differences between ordinary and military volunteering**

Volunteering in peacetime	Volunteering during the war
Only some segments of society are involved (usually young people)	All segments of society are involved, regardless of age, social status, type of activity, education, etc.
Everyday experience	Existential experience
There are clear selection criteria	No criteria
The level of organization is vertical-horizontal with a dominant number of formal organizations	The level of organization is horizontal, spontaneous, and situational with a dominant number of informal organizations
Self-realisation is among the main motives	The main motives include the protection of state sovereignty and helping Others
Mostly humanitarian aid: food, hygiene products, clothing, etc.	The aid is distinctly focused on the needs of the front. Rangefinders, silencers, thermal imagers, uniforms, bulletproof vests, first aid kits, drones (e.g. 'Bayraktars'), Starlink – these are the usual everyday requests of defenders
Volunteer activity is carried out in a calm mode – orderly and consistent work	Volunteering is a 24/7 activity that turns into just another job, taking up ALL of your time. Defenders' requests received by volunteers have to be met immediately. That is why volunteers talk in jest that if they need to find/get something, they do not have time to search for it (a week / two weeks / a month) – they need it 'for yesterday'
Volunteers assist government agencies in performing certain tasks	Volunteering is more than just assistance. The volunteer movement in Ukraine literally dresses, feeds, treats the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and provides them with a variety of military devices

It should be added to the aforementioned characteristics of the volunteer movement in Ukraine that its formation has been taking place not 'from above', not at the initiative of the authorities, but 'from below'. The active mutual communication of people and their communication with the soldiers have made for the prompt and effective response of volunteers to army requests. Since the army and the government were completely unprepared for war, the volunteers not only organised fundraising, but they looked for and bought everything that was needed, as well as delivered

everything to the front lines on their own. Volunteers, by themselves, began to assemble first-aid kits for our soldiers. Realising the lack of knowledge, they began to attend various courses on providing first aid and figure out what should be put in first-aid kits and what should not. Receiving various requests from the front, they have to search for information on absolutely everything: medicine, ammunition, uniforms, drones, radios, cars, weapons, etc. They took over the supply of food and water. They do not ask what the state can do for them, but they do everything they can for the state. Such self-organization of society is horizontal in nature, which makes it so effective. “Ukrainians demonstrate their creative self-realization by getting united in extreme conditions – volunteering, defending state interests by everyone in their place, forming civil society from several civil initiatives that sometimes start with the efforts of a single person. Accordingly, the level of social solidarity rises as well” (Ruchka 2014). Anatoliy Ruchka introduces the concept of ‘creative individualism’, which means a citizen’s responsibility for themselves, their families, the state, their life creativity, and their awareness of the value of their personalities. It is no exaggeration to speak of creative collectivism when people come together in smaller and larger communities for effective volunteering.

A lot has been written in the scientific literature about the effectiveness of horizontal relations in the social sphere. In particular, Harry C. Triandis defined horizontality as a model of social relations based on the values of equality and mutual respect of people in a social group, and verticality as a type of relations grounded on status and hierarchy (Triandis 1995). Pointing out the difference between these two types of social organization, the following differences should be noted. Verticality implies a precisely constructed pyramid of human relationships, status, and hierarchy. Such a system involves strict subordination and submission to those who have greater power. This, accordingly, does not always have a positive impact on each individual member of society. A person in the ‘vertical’ system is in a situation of subordination, which often deprives him or her of freedom, initiative, and a creative approach. This, in turn, affects the efficiency of the work. In addition, status, power, and competition become the leading ones in a person’s life coordinate system, which affects their relationships with others who are seen as a means rather than an end.

Horizontal relationships in society, in contrast to vertical ones, are not built on power relations, inequality, and status. These are relationships based on equality, respect for others, cooperation, adequate competition, freedom and responsibility, and a creative approach. The horizontal system of relations encourages the formation and development of autonomous and responsible individuals who do not appeal to authorities but are themselves the initiators of changes. It is this horizontal type of relationship that manifested itself during the war. The solidarity of people, their active communication, trust, and awareness of ‘*If not me, then who?!*’ – contributed to the effectiveness, efficiency, and coherence of actions.

The volunteer movement has been marked not only by the unity of people in action but also by their spiritual unity. The volunteer movement in Ukraine has a well-defined moral core. Whether volunteers are ordinary citizens or professionals (e.g. firefighters, police, emergency medical workers), they are quick responders who

often have a strong emotional connection to the community and the affected area. In this way, they feel obliged to protect, help, and support, and this is the main reason for moral motivation to volunteer. Volunteers see their motivation as valuable. It is based on such values as humanity, care, altruism, democracy, and empathy and is understood as a moral duty of a person. In volunteer work, it is important to be aware of one's responsibility, and this issue, of course, is related to the moral sensitivity of the volunteer. The lack of organizational or professional training among volunteers is connected to other problems: ethical dilemmas, emotional and physical exhaustion. The volunteer's work is exhausting, since due to a large number of refugees and the needs of our defenders, the volunteer's working time during the day lasts for 8 to 16 hours, sometimes even longer. They inevitably have to deal with enormous psychological stress, because what is happening on the territory of our country, with our people and home cannot be left aside from thoughts or simply forgotten. Звичайно, є волонтери, що керуються егоїстичними мотивами. They help in order to show themselves 'in a good light', make a PR campaign for themselves, make money illegally, etc. Such cases do occur, but quite rarely (Chernysh 2022).

It is not surprising that people themselves understand that war is not only on the battlefield, it is fought in our minds. What matters is what we fight for and what values we stand for. The war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine is a war of values. People in Ukraine often emphasise that we are not like them because we stand for freedom, everyone's right to self-determination, democratic and liberal values, honesty, and justice. This is the vertical that organises the horizontal. The volunteer movement, which has engulfed the entire country, indicates powerful internal and external work. Along with a strong awareness of themselves as a nation with certain values and ideals, Ukrainians have been actively implementing these values. An old ideal of philosophy – not just to pronounce certain principles, but also to live according to them – is getting its realisation!

The surge of volunteering in Ukraine can be considered a process of moral recovery of society. The 'boom in good deeds' shows that a lot of conscious citizens have appeared in the country. There is a general tendency in Ukraine: people respond to every crisis with active actions. This was the case in 2014–2015, when there was an upsurge of volunteer and public initiatives, as well as during the first lockdown due to Covid-19. As a result of Russia's attack on Ukraine, citizens understand that this is their country and its destiny depends on them, so they are trying to do something. In the course of the survey on young people's employment during the war, the following results were obtained: I'm involved in volunteering – 22.4%; I help the Armed Forces – 13.1%; I'm engaged in humanitarian and coordination activities with internally displaced persons – 7.8%. The younger the respondents, the more they are involved in volunteer activities: 25–34 years old – 17.5%; 20–24 years old – 21.8%; 18–19 years old – 22.5%; 14–17 years old – 40%. When answering the question, 'What kind of volunteering activities have you been involved in since the beginning of the war?', most of the respondents indicated that they transfer funds for the needs of the army – 74.8%. Other activities are as follows: wage an information war on social networks – 38.2%; help internally displaced persons –

33%; produce materials necessary for defense – 19.1%, work in a humanitarian hub – 18.9%; provide psychological assistance to people who need it – 5.4%. The older the respondents, the higher the percentage of people who transfer funds for the needs of the army: 14–17 years old – 56%; 18–19 years old – 71.8%; 20–24 years old – 75.6%; 25–34 years old – 80.5%. In terms of gender distribution, more women (76.5%) transfer funds than men (69.5%) (U-Report Survey Digest 2022).

The state turned out to be unprepared to respond promptly and act effectively in extreme conditions. Under such conditions, the Ukrainians demonstrated an impressive ability to consolidate and mobilise, they took upon themselves the solution to the most acute problems caused by military aggression. Compared to 2014, when the main focus of volunteering was on helping internally displaced persons through humanitarian aid, psychological support, assistance with housing, legal advice, etc. (*Report based on the results of an all-Ukrainian survey of internally displaced persons and residents of host communities* 2016), today, this aid has been supplemented by a pronounced military component in the form of supplying Ukrainian soldiers with clothing, food, hygiene products, some types of weapons, and even unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

It should be noted that during the war in Ukraine there has been a boom in the registration of charitable organisations. In April 2022, exceptional activity was demonstrated in the issue of supporting the army, the state, and vulnerable groups of the population. Thus, compared to April 2021, there were 12 times more registrations of organisations specialising in charitable activities, in particular taking into account the possibility of fundraising. This is obviously the response of businesses, private initiatives, and international partners to the willingness of Ukrainians to invest in the future of Ukraine, and not just help. This is strategic philanthropy, which is equal to a readiness to support the army and fund initiatives to reconstruct the state, its cities, and villages.

Nowadays, more and more organisations plan their activities in the long term. This is comparable to investments in business; however, the dividends here are not funds, but a social effect in the form of saved lives, and an improved system of medicine or education in Ukraine.

We should also pay attention to two practices of volunteering – targeted and systemic. Even though they solve one task – to help those in need – purposeful long-term work is often opposed to targeted assistance, and the benefactors are encouraged to move on to large-scale projects, to calculate the effectiveness of social investments. What is the difference between the two approaches? Targeted help is assistance ‘here and now’: raising money for the purchase of necessary things for specific soldiers, medical treatment, assistance to internally displaced persons, etc. Systemic assistance involves programs designed to solve a social problem in general. There is an opinion that the future belongs to projects that can help hundreds and thousands of those in need of this help.

At first glance, these two approaches to volunteering seem to be quite different. In addition, no one will argue with the fact that it is very important to help a large number of people at once. However, as direct participants in volunteer activities, we

would like to make a few arguments in favour of the approach that has so far been considered somewhat ‘outdated’:

- Great demand for urgent help. A lot of targeted requests are accumulated from people who cannot wait for help at the government level for a long time.
- Finding an effective solution to the problem is difficult without analysing private requests. There must be a person behind any system. When working with ‘living’ stories, one better understands the specifics of a particular situation, the reasons for its occurrence, and the difficulties people face. Government programs may meet only basic needs.
- Systemic assistance and targeted assistance are closely connected. Some foundations work in two directions, solving systemic problems and helping specific people. Both directions are equally important: we ought to think about the future, but also help those who need support now.
- Systematic assistance issues should be addressed at the state level. Charitable foundations should not take over the functions of government bodies. The non-profit sector responds quickly to critical cases. However, basic needs must be guaranteed by the state.

Also, private requests evoke a greater emotional response. This can hardly be considered an advantage, but emotions are a significant part of the motivation for charity. That does not devalue systemic charity, since every personal story is important.

There are more than 15,000 charitable organisations in Ukraine, 8% of which were registered in April 2022 (Vkursi 2022). The number of people involved in volunteering has increased exponentially. 43.5 thousand volunteers applied through the Ukrainian Volunteer Service platform alone, and about 100 thousand new users joined the chats.

According to Forbes, in June, the 20 largest funds raised UAH 3.1 billion in support of Ukraine. The Serhiy Prytula’s foundation was among the leaders; thanks to the successful campaign *People’s Bayraktar*, the foundation raised UAH 600 million in three days at the end of June (approximately \$16.235 million) (Forbes 2022). Serhiy Prytula had been helping the army as a private volunteer since Russia had annexed Crimea and invaded Donbas. At first, he helped with equipment, armour, and food. Later, he began to provide military units with high-precision equipment, drones, and equipment for command posts. In 2020, during the pandemic, Serhiy created the Charitable Foundation for non-military assistance, headed by Anna Gvozdiar. At the same time, Serhiy continued to help the army as a private person. In February 2022, when Russia launched a full-scale invasion, the foundation immediately expanded its operations by opening a military headquarters for helping the military and a headquarters for humanitarian aid to civilians. For efficient transportation and storage of cargo from all over the world, 4 logistics centres were opened in Ukrainian cities and one centre in Przemyśl (Poland). The head office of the

Foundation is located in Kyiv. Currently, the military headquarter is focused on providing the Ukrainian army with means of communication, optical devices, drones, UAVs, transport, and means of tactical medicine for the military. The humanitarian headquarters assist civilians in the occupied territories and within a 70-kilometre radius of the front line. A separate direction of the headquarters is the *NEST* project, with the mission of bringing life back to de-occupied towns and villages by providing people with free mobile houses on their land.

In addition, new areas of activity appeared, for which there was no request until February 24. For example, Natalia Cherniavska organised such a project in Kharkiv. Her service clogs the windows that were knocked out after the shelling with wooden slabs. There is also children's volunteering, the spread of which is perceived very emotionally and sensitively. Homemade sweets, nuts, marshmallows, braided patriotic bracelets, handmade angels, bouquets of dried flowers, children's paintings, etc. – have become part of charity fairs organised by children to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Equally common is the situation with villagers who collectively (i.e. with the involvement of almost all residents of the village) organise the production of canned food, energy bars, powdered soups, and other food for the army.

### 3. Volunteer movement and the contradictory dynamics of its development

At the same time, the nature of the volunteer movement is not homogeneous and is sometimes torn by contradictions:

1. Volunteer movement arises when people, to a certain extent, realise the hopelessness of the situation, and the inability of the authorities to resolve it. This is a situation of hopelessness and despair. Even Kierkegaard (Kierkegaard 2013), noting the role of despair in our lives, did not characterise it as a negative phenomenon, since it is despair, 'falling to the bottom', that allows expressing oneself as much as possible. In such a situation, we have nothing to lose, which means that we can implement whatever we want! Therefore, the reverse and the opposite manifestation of the volunteer movement is not just vigorous activity but also hope for a better future. At times volunteers take on such seemingly impossible tasks, but their perseverance and faith work miracles. Olga Tesliak's Lviv Volunteer Headquarters once set itself the task of purchasing an ambulance for the 24th brigade. And, as the participants themselves said later, the mission was impossible. That required an extremely large amount of money and effort. However, when they succeeded in that, their joy knew no bounds. The foundation of Serhiy Prytula, a Ukrainian presenter, volunteer, and public figure, also set itself the task of acquiring the 'people's' *Bayraktar*. Within a few days, they managed to raise the necessary funds for three *Bayraktars*, which surprised the representatives of the Turkish company that produces these weapons so much that they decided to donate this UAV to Ukraine!

2. Volunteers are constantly balancing on the verge between law and morality. Recently, the authorities have been actively seeking to check the activities of volunteer organisations. As a result, a wave of indignation has swept across the country, as representatives of security agencies have detained volunteers and confiscated property intended for the front. On the one hand, such checks are completely justified. On the other hand, they are unfair, since, in Ukraine, the terms of operation of volunteer headquarters have not been clearly and competently prescribed by law. The volunteer movement took its shape spontaneously, focusing on the requests and needs of the defenders. For the volunteers, the priority was helping rather than getting bogged down in the bureaucratic system. Of course, the volunteers reported on their work, but the form of reporting was unprecedented in nature. These were not paper reports, but the photo and video reports of the defenders themselves who received help! But that was not enough for law enforcement agencies that wanted a clear form of reporting. Here is a Facebook post by one of the volunteers from the *Zymna Voda* headquarters: “Of course, it is necessary to check volunteers... We are not a caste of untouchables, we are living people, and, surely, there’s no man without sin! But dear regulatory and law enforcement agencies, remember the first days of the escalation – mass mobilisation and wild shortages... military stores and tourist equipment shops were empty... goods were not arriving, there was a terrible mess at the borders... The army needed everything – from socks to Bayraktars! We got out of it as much as we could... we came up with our own schemes and rules – perhaps not according to the rules of accounting, but we reported to people about every penny spent... Yes, we knew that this day would come and we would have to show the reports to the regulatory authorities, so we ourselves came up with the records of humanitarian aid issuance, acts of acceptance and transfer, photo reports, and whatever else you want... the result was people’s trust and support. How did you help us? Did you provide any clarifications or instructions? Did you make clear rules? Did you bring our work to any common standards? No, you did not!!! We helped the military, including your mobilised workers, without any bureaucratic procedures, because urgent dressing-providing prevailed over signing-approving... Now you come and accuse us of embezzlement... you open criminal cases without evidence and grounds and compromise the entire volunteer movement, on which a good percentage of our army’s achievements on all fronts rests! What for? And aren’t you too early? Won’t you be able to do it a bit later? Do you need to break up volunteering amid the war? Yes, in the constant pursuit of discounts and urgency, we may have errors and shortcomings: documents are not attached, acts are not collected, receipts are not filed... But it’s not about theft or a crime!!! It’s about a human factor, lack of time, unforeseen circumstances, and force majeure that are present in every work... Stop, direct your ardour to the fight against collaborators and internal enemies –

we do have them... And you will have time to check the volunteers, we are all here, and believe me, if we are going to leave this country, we will be the last ones – we have a lot of unfinished business!” (Nyz 2022).

This situation once again confirms the fact that during the war, each of us makes our own choices and sets our own priorities. Volunteers face these internal choices as well. Of course, it is necessary to obey the law but what if morality is above the law?

The dialogue between the volunteer movement and the authorities in Ukraine is quite complicated today. First of all, this is because the distinction between volunteer aid and humanitarian aid is not spelled out at the legislative level. The activities of individuals are legally incomprehensible. It was all this that caused the widespread checks of the volunteer movement that are taking place today. But this is exactly what causes the indignation of the masses. If the government did not take care of the formation of clear legislation and the volunteers were forced to solve urgent issues and problems completely on their own, without the support of the state, then what right do the authorities have to evaluate their activities?. The military write the name of volunteer Olga Tesliak on shells sent to the enemy. For her, this is the biggest reward for many years of her volunteering (*TRK The first western 2022*).

3. It is also worth remembering that the volunteer movement is not about something abstract, it is about people who work every day for the victory of our country. And it is impossible not to mention the extremely complex atmosphere that has become part of their daily lives. Volunteers are people who are tormented by remorse every day. Receiving requests and working on them, they spend not only huge amounts of money but also internal resources (fear, despair, hope, desire to help, mercy, compassion, pain, sorrow – this is the range of emotions they experience). And the most terrible situation is when help reaches the fighters, but they are no longer alive. Volunteers are constantly tormented by questions: *‘Did I do everything I could?’*, *‘What is my activity worth if I cannot protect the defenders?’*, *‘What else can I do?’*, *‘Why am I not in their place?’*, *‘Why did he die, and I’m still here?’*. Remorse is something that haunts volunteers in their daily work. A situation arises when the volunteers themselves need psychological help.

The war that came to Ukraine has led to many changes in society and has become a certain ‘catalyst’ for humanity. Joint involvement and solidarity as a fact of citizenship have turned into an existential experience for people. The valuable resume of identity became surprisingly obvious, sharper, and more definite than it seemed during the pandemic and the long-term military conflict in the East of Ukraine since 2014. The war brought to the fore the issue of freedom and security. A reassembly of identity has taken place, the formation of oneself as a project of a Ukrainian, a citizen of Ukraine, which is expressed through involvement in the defense of the country. The war destroyed the ‘one-dimensionality’ of man in its essence (Marcuse 1991).

People's consciousness has undergone a significant transformation. Life has been divided into 'before' and 'after'. Volunteering has become an integral part of these profound changes in the social structure of Ukrainian society. It was formed as a special type of activity environment, where Ukrainians demonstrated an impressive ability to consolidate and mobilise, they took upon themselves the solution to the most acute problems, which they had not faced since gaining their independence in 1991.

#### 4. Conclusions

With the beginning of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine, there have been significant changes in the self-consciousness of its citizens. The war as a frontier situation made people rethink the meaning of such words as *citizen*, *freedom*, *security*, *responsibility*, *courage*, *humanity*, and *honesty*. The people of Ukraine faced the need for thorough national and personal self-determination since the lack of the latter not only fixes individual degradation but can also be dangerous for the existence of the country and the nation itself. Such dramatic changes within the country contributed to the maximum consolidation of its population, resulting in the formation of a powerful volunteer movement. The emergence of volunteer organisations (official and unofficial), as well as the individual (private) assistance of each citizen of Ukraine, give evidence of powerful national development, the formation of national self-consciousness, and the reassessment of the historical past. The volunteer movement is strongly moral in nature, as it is connected with a keen sense of injustice the country has faced. The desire to help others, mercy, compassion, sacrifice, responsibility, altruism, and respect are the feelings that guide volunteers and give them strength for further work.

Among the features of the volunteer movement in Ukraine after the attack of the Russian Federation, the following should be noted:

- maximal unification of the population of Ukraine in the fight against a common enemy. This unity is based on both national and basic ethical principles that make up the ideological core of the liberation war;
- no age limit (even children are involved in the volunteer movement);
- extremely active and productive cooperation that lasts 24/7 and is based on a horizontal type of relationship;
- military nature of volunteer organizations;
- if the Armed Forces of Ukraine defend our country in direct combat with the enemy, then the volunteer movement is their rear!

Such intensification of the volunteer movement in Ukraine indicates the birth of the Ukrainian nation. Nowadays, our country is fighting for its right to life, free development, and the opportunity to follow the path it chooses for itself. Unfortunately, not a single developed state has escaped such a dramatic experience. To appreciate freedom, you need to know its price!

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