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**IMPROVEMENT OF LEGAL AND SOCIAL BASIS  
OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION SYSTEMS OF MILITARY SERVICEMEN  
OF THE DEFENSE FORCES OF UKRAINE ACCORDING TO NATO RECOMMENDATIONS  
(2014–2022)**

*The social protection and social support of military personnel is one of the main principles laid in the foundation of the modern military policy of the Ukrainian state. It is especially important in the process of reforming the defense forces of Ukraine on the way to increasing the effectiveness of their performance of the main tasks: the defense of Ukraine, the protection of its sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability.*

*It should be noted that in connection with the war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the articulation by the Ukrainian state of the path to the European Union and NATO, the urgency of the need to reform the system of social protection of servicemen of the defense forces of Ukraine does not raise doubts. During 2022–2023 the socio-political situation in Ukraine has undergone fundamental changes. The standard of living has decreased, but the level of responsibility and self-awareness of military personnel has increased significantly, and, despite the losses in the number of personnel of Defence Forces of Ukraine, the number of civilian personnel, and especially women, has significantly increased, which demonstrated willingness and ability to defend national interests with weapons in hand. This trend requires the state leadership to pay attention to the needs of all categories of servicemen, to satisfy them as much as possible. In general, it means to raise the standards of social protection and social support of servicemen of the defense forces of Ukraine to a higher level, which will meet both the modern requests and needs of the Ukrainian Army, as well as the NATO recommendations and decisions.*

**Key words:** *social protection of servicemen, military personnel; recruitment and retention; Armed Forces of Ukraine; Defence Forces of Ukraine; NATO; conceptual and historical aspects; democratic values; democratization of the Ukrainian Army; military activity.*

**Introduction.** The military as an institution is currently experiencing a state of great flux. On this way it is not only important to understand the changing demographic profile of the military personnel, psychographics is also very relevant. That is, people's attitudes, views, preferences and the framework from which they see and understand their environment. Effective social protection system forming as important for civilian staff as for military personnel.

The NATO constantly examines the influence on military service of how far the Armed Forces are able to meet the individual needs of potential recruits and serving personnel. A lot of scientific researches and efforts address the better understanding and achievement of individuals' and group needs of military personnel (e.g., the requirements of service

personnel and their families when being posted etc.) (Modernizing Recruitment and Retention Strategies. 2022, p. 4–5).

**Background.** According to a study commissioned by the European Defense Agency (EDA) titled "Exploring Europe's capability requirements for 2035 and beyond," the nature of war remains universal, and the character of warfare continues to evolve and pose new challenges on all sides (Käihkö, I., 2018). While we see the military conflicts in European continent continue to exist, we understand current conflicts include elements of hybrid warfare, proxy wars, cyber capabilities, and strategic attacks to disrupt critical infrastructure such as financial services. Nevertheless, war retain its fundamental nature as a violent and purposeful activity. According to this study, future conflicts will occur in all physical

(land, air, sea, and space) and virtual (cyberspace) domains. Therefore, a conflict will not be limited to only one domain at any one time. Moreover, conflicts on densely populated terrain will increase due to increasing urbanization.

In this respect, a number of key high-level requirements, which will significantly affect all the generic military tasks of armed forces, is presented. According to the study mentioned above, there is a need for enhanced resilience among individual service personnel, which may be achieved through human enhancement technologies (either biological or cybernetic) in the future. Thus, enhancing individual soldiers will empower them with improved information gathering mobility and resilience to operate in complex, contested environments. Furthermore, such technologies may also help address the potential need for country to mitigate the decrease in the recruitment pool for military forces due to the expected population decline, thus requiring the existing personnel to serve longer or have more deployments that are intensive.

However, those processes requires more and more attention to the system of protection military staff, including the more funding and increase the social protection. Because the future soldier will take, face even more future risks for his or her lives and health. In this context, Ukrainian army tries to keep pace with the changes in progress and update their recruitment methods and the skills and characteristics required for those who want to join the army or continue their career within it. This is made possible because, in general, the characteristics required for a soldier to meet the needs of professional armies are very similar, regardless of the country considered.

**The purpose of the article** — research of the process of improving the regulatory and social foundations of the system of recruitment and retention of military servicemen as a component of the social security system of the Defence Forces of Ukraine in accordance with NATO recommendations (2014–2022).

The methodological principles of the research are based on the provisions of critical social theory, social philosophy, which defines the general principles of subject-object and subject-subject interaction at this stage of its social-historical and cultural-civilizational development of Ukraine.

The interdisciplinary approach made it possible to focus considerable attention on the generalization of experience and the presentation of practical recommendations for optimizing existing approaches to the implementation of the NATO recommendations

into the social protection policy in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

**Originality.** The main NATO recommendations on the way of forming more effective social protection system for the military personnel are following:

**1. Affordable Accommodation and Quality of Life.** One way of helping out service personnel is to introduce an interest-free loan for men and women in the army who want to buy a home. A modest loan can already be beneficial for paying the deposit and other costs such as solicitor's fees and estate agent's fees. The Ministry of Defence of a given state can allocate a budget to finance these loans. In addition to financial aid, the military could help their personnel by providing information about the housing market and the process of buying a house, as not all members of the force feel like their knowledge in this regard is sufficient (Ministry of Defence, 2014). The United Kingdom has implemented a loan scheme of this kind, called "The Forces Help to Buy", with a 200-million-pound budget. The scheme enables service personnel to lend up to 50% of their salary, interest-free, to buy their first home or to find a home on assignment. To qualify for the loan, service personnel should have completed the prerequisite length of service, have more than six months left to serve at the moment of application and meet required medical standards (Ministry of Defence, 2014).

Quality of life refers to those non-monetary benefits, for example, base housing, that impact positively or negatively on the wellbeing and morale of members and their families.

**2. Partner Employment.** Helping military partners find employment and supporting the wellbeing of military families is therefore important for force retention and recruitment, as partner employment is often a deciding factor for armed forces personnel. Assisting military families with partner employment can be done in several ways. For example, governments can aid military partners with employment by increasing opportunities for them in governmental and private careers. Some of these jobs could be made available only to military partners or take in a fixed percentage of military partners. An online career portal focused solely on job postings for military partners could be helpful to find these vacancies (Gonzales et al., 2015). Additionally, governments can increase opportunities for educational advancement; identify and fulfil the academic, licensing, or credentialing requirements tied to their career objectives; help with the application and hiring processes; offer employment readiness assistance; and facilitate



professional connections that could help military spouses in their careers (Gonzales et al., 2015).

**3. Pay and Benefits.** This refers to salary, medical (and dental), recruiting and retention bonuses and other benefits that are given in exchange for military service.

Many people leave the military because they find more attractive employment alternatives elsewhere; this is especially true for highly qualified personnel like pilots, Information Communication Technology (ICT) specialists, technicians, and traffic controllers. An overall pay raise for all military personnel can greatly improve recruitment and retention in the armed forces because military pay is often too low to compete with private sector employment. According to a study by Deloitte for the Belgian Ministry of Defence, regular soldiers used to earn €331 less per month than average police recruits. Now soldier salaries have been brought into line with police salaries (Hope, 2021). However, in other European countries, wages in the military are still very low. For example, in Spain, soldiers are paid between 1000 and 1150 euros per month, which is a fraction higher than the minimum wage. When Spanish soldiers are still in the military training period, they earn 359 euros per month (Gutierrez, 2021).

This is similar to Portugal, where soldiers are paid 830 euros in their initial phase of employment; this can later increase to 875 euros. These salaries are the gross salary and therefore still need to be subjected to taxes and other deductions. Recruits who are still in the training period earn 665 euros per month, which is the minimum wage in Portugal (Ferreira, 2021). In France, soldiers earn 1522 euros per month (Romero, 2022), which is less than the minimum wage. UK armed forces personnel mentioned that financial considerations were of high importance for staying in the army, particularly benefits relating to education allowance, pension and an appropriate wage (Ministry of Defence, 2014). Increasing salaries and benefits will make a career in the military seem more attractive and improve recruitment.

**4. Diversity in the Army.** In order to improve retention and recruitment in the military, it is also important to consider the inclusion of women and minorities. While women make up half of the population, they constitute only 6 to 20 percent of armies in Europe and 12% of NATO armed forces combined (NATO, 2019). A separate focus on women and minorities is key to improving these groups' recruitment and retention rates, as they have different needs and wants than traditional military recruits.

Besides the benefits of higher recruitment and retention rates, an increase in women and minorities in the army also ensures that the military better reflects the community it serves. Greater diversity in the armed forces is key to maintaining a healthy connection between the military and the rest of society.

Flexible parental leave and childcare are also strong retention strategies that are particularly helpful for women and families in general. Flexible parental leave means that the leave can be taken any time during 52 weeks, or possibly even longer, after the day the child is born or placed with an adoptive family (Trucano et al., 2017). Allowing parental leave to be taken by both parents as they see fit will give new parents a lot more flexibility. This can be especially useful for families of which both partners work in the armed forces. The length of parental leave for men and women is very different in European countries. Still, in general, longer parental leave will make it easier for families to stay home with their children and spend time with their families. In addition, counting parental leave toward promotion is necessary for the professional advancement of women because they disproportionately take on the role of primary caretaker.

Lastly, making sure the military is a safe space for anyone who wants to join the army or who is already employed in the army is crucial for recruitment and retention. A diverse workforce can become a place of harassment and discrimination against women and minority groups when no measures are taken to counteract these issues.

To prevent any types of discrimination from happening in military, training materials should focus on sexual harassment, gender discrimination and racial discrimination. Training materials about gender should emphasize the most common behaviors experienced for both men and women (Calkins et al., 2021). Moreover, training materials should be geared towards changing attitudes that underlie racist conduct and discrimination by providing sensitization, leadership and mediation toward harassment issues.

**Conclusion.** During the last few years, significant systemic changes took place in the security and defense sector of Ukraine regarding the implementation of a higher level of social protection for military personnel in directions close to NATO standards. In particular:

female servicemen are given access to all military accounting specialties of private, non-commissioned and non-commissioned officers, including combat;

female servicemen can be appointed to all officer positions, except for those that are subject to restrictions related to risks to their health (use of explosives, poisonous substances, direct firefighting, on submarines and surface ships);

girls' access to military education at all levels is open; a number of training events for specialists of the security and defense sector, educational events for the population were held; professional training of management personnel on issues of the "Women, peace, security" agenda was carried out;

amendments were made to some legislative acts of Ukraine regarding the granting of status and social guarantees to individuals from among the participants of the anti-terrorist operation, the operation of the joint forces as well as military operations of 2022–2023. For example, volunteers are officially recognized as veterans and receive the right to social guarantees, benefits on par with other military personnel (Krymets, L., Chorny, V. S., Cherkovniak-Horodetska, O., Sadykova, V., & Manzia, Y., 2023);

the system of protection of family members of military personnel has been improved, additional opportunities for education and a significant number of social benefits have been opened for participants in hostilities and their family members;

the system of psychological assistance and rehabilitation for servicemen participating in hostilities has been improved and the work of a chaplaincy service in the Armed Forces of Ukraine has been introduced to meet the spiritual needs of servicemen.

However, it is still an issue for defense forces of Ukraine to provide housing for servicemen and

their family members remains unresolved, and against the background of the total destruction of the housing stock and infrastructure of Ukraine by the enemy, they become of primary importance.

The second challenge on the way of providing more effective system of social support of military personnel for Armed Forces of Ukraine is lack of social protection for their family members (especially for children of military staff). There are no social programs that help military personnel to care about their children or other family members if they need any support in that time when military staff complete assigned tasks. As well as there is still no social program for helping military partners find employment and supporting the well-being of military families.

Expanding the scope of scientific research on the fundamental aspects of the formation of an effective policy of social protection of servicemen in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, taking into account the requirements and challenges of modernity, is a promising direction of scientific research in historical, philosophical, pedagogical and psychological sciences.

The author calls on the scientific community to participate in theoretical research in the outlined field. A modern military serviceman must be not only a professional in military affairs and a patriot of his Motherland, but also a citizen devoted to the cause of Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine, which requires him to follow the principles of the European Union and NATO, and this means that NATO's recommendations and decisions should also be implemented and taken into account in the defense forces of Ukraine.

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**УДОСКОНАЛЕННЯ ПРАВОВИХ ТА СОЦІАЛЬНИХ ЗАСАД  
СИСТЕМИ НАЙМУ ТА УТРИМАННЯ ВІЙСЬКОВОСЛУЖБОВЦІВ СИЛ ОБОРОНИ  
УКРАЇНИ ВІДПОВІДНО ДО РЕКОМЕНДАЦІЙ НАТО  
(2014–2022 рр.)**

*У процесі реформування Сил оборони України на шляху до підвищення ефективності виконання ними основних завдань: оборони України, захисту її суверенітету, територіальної цілісності та недоторканності, — соціальний захист військовослужбовців є одним із основних принципів, що закладається в фундамент сучасної воєнної політики української держави.*

*У контексті дослідження варто зазначити, що у зв'язку з війною російської федерації проти України, артикуляції українською державою шляху до Європейського Союзу та НАТО, актуальність необхідності проведення реформи системи соціального захисту військовослужбовців Сил оборони України не викликає сумнівів, адже протягом 2022–2023 рр. соціально-політична ситуація в Україні зазнала фундаментальних змін, рівень життя населення знизився, проте, значно підвищився рівень відповідальності та самосвідомості військовослужбовців, і, незважаючи на втрати у кількості особового складу Сил оборони України, значно збільшилася кількість цивільного персоналу, і особливо жінок, які продемонстрували готовність і здатність відстоювати національні інтереси зі зброєю у руках. Ця тенденція вимагає від керівництва держави зважати на потреби усіх категорій військовослужбовців, максимально їх задовольняти і у цілому підвищувати стандарти соціального захисту і соціального забезпечення військовослужбовців Сил оборони України, що відповідатиме як сучасним запитам і потребам українського війська, так і рекомендаціям та рішенням НАТО.*

**Ключові слова:** соціальний захист військовослужбовців, військовослужбовці; найм та утримання персоналу; Збройні Сили України; Сили оборони України; НАТО; концептуальний та історичний аспекти; демократичні цінності; демократизація української армії; військова діяльність.