

# Civilian Resilience and Resistance

Integrating Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives with a Focus on Ukraine

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## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Asymmetric Threat Analysis Center (ATAC), a joint program between START and UMD's Applied Research Lab for Intelligence and Security (ARLIS), is funded by the Department of Defense under award no. HQ003421F0481. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Defense.

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# CONTENTS

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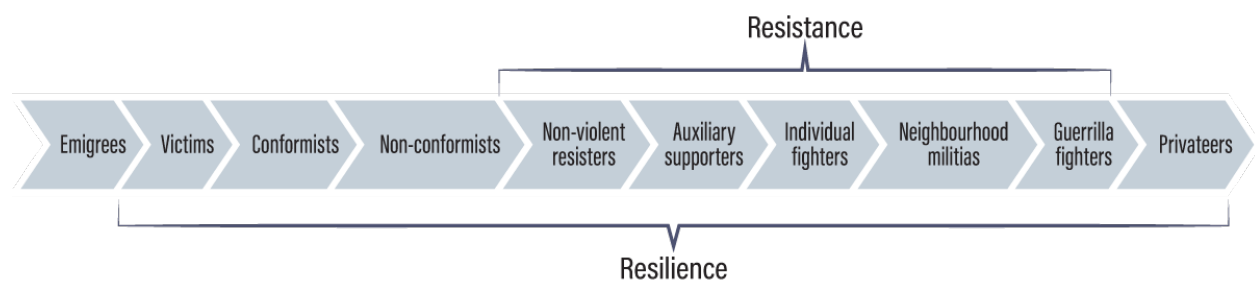
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Interdisciplinary Insights and Where to Find Them	2
2.1	Democratic Values	3
2.2	Ideology and Nationalism	5
2.3	Survival at Stake	7
3.	Factors Driving Resistance: Insights from Ukraine	8
3.1	Demographic factors	8
3.2	Conflict Duration	9
3.3	Proximity to the battlefield	9
3.4	Foreign Support	10
3.5	Communications	11
3.6	Leadership impact	11
3.7	Anger	12
4.	Organizing Resistance: Ukraine Deep-Dive	13
4.1	Legal Measures and Violent Resistance	14
4.2	Cross-Sectional Engagement	16
4.3	Leave-Behind Pre-trained Resistance	19
5.	Nonviolent Resistance	19
5.1	Agency and Conformism	19
5.2	Willingness and Forms of Resistance	21
5.3	Nonviolence Forms and Empirics	24
6.	Conclusion	26

# 1. Introduction

Over the past century, conventional state vs. state war has become ever rarer, yet crises and conflicts short of war — as well as associated suffering and casualties of non-military persons — have continued, and even increased.<sup>1</sup> Russia’s war against Ukraine had started in 2014 as a particularly challenging example of gray zone (or hybrid) warfare, and subsequently has become one of the few recent conventional warfare cases,<sup>2</sup> challenging the above-mentioned trend (and perhaps marking the start of that trend’s reversal, as the conflict in the Middle East continues to spiral).

Against this backdrop, the extent of, and motivations behind, civilian involvement in crises and conflicts has been studied through a broad variety of disciplinary lenses: psychology, sociology, political science, and military planning. Civilian roles under investigation range from victims and emigres to nonviolent resisters and guerilla fighters, as well as (foreign) private military contractors joining an appealing cause (see Fig. 1).

**Figure 1: Civilian Roles in Crises and Conflicts**



Category gradation within this spectrum could be further refined (or conflated), and some categories overlap organically (e.g., anyone could be victimized, certain forms resistance could be conducted from exile, persons engaged in nonviolent resistance could be providing auxiliary support to fighters, etc.). Significantly, concerning resistance activities, both the upper and lower boundaries are blurry and disputed. Namely, when it comes to bearing

<sup>1</sup> Wilkenfeld, J. and Murauskaite, E. (eds.) (2023). *Escalation Management in International Crises: The United States Confronts its Adversaries*, Edward Elgar Publishing; Blackwill, R. D., and Harris, J. M. (2016). *War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft*. Belknap Press of Harvard University; Krause, K. (Fall 2016). From Armed Conflict to Political Violence: Mapping and Explaining Conflict Trends. *Daedalus*, 145(4), 113-126; Kahl, C. (2006). How We Fight. *Foreign Affairs*, 83-101; Hoffman, F. G. (2007). Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: the Rise of Hybrid Wars. Potomac Institute. <https://www.comw.org/qdr/fulltext/0712hoffman.pdf>; Talvan, A. (2015). Hybrid Warfare: Specific Features and Developments in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/8470246f414b3d6f9e83562511fd9083/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=2026346>; Institute for Economics and Peace. *Global Peace Index 2023*.

[https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/#/?utm\\_campaign=wp\\_todays\\_worldview&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nL\\_todayworld](https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/#/?utm_campaign=wp_todays_worldview&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nL_todayworld); Gleditsch, N. P., Wallensteen, P., Eriksson, M., Sollenberg, M., and Strand, H. (2002). Armed Conflict 1946-2001: A New Dataset. *Journal of Peace Research*, 39(5), 615-637. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343302039005007>; Szayna, T. S., O’Mahony, A., Kavanagh, J., Watts, S., Frederick, B., Norlen, T. C., and Voorhie, P. (2017). Conflict Trends and Conflict Drivers. RAND. [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1000/RR1063/RAND\\_RR1063.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1000/RR1063/RAND_RR1063.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Murauskaite, E. (ed.) (2024). *War in Ukraine: Understanding Western Tools Short of War*, De Gruyter; Wilkenfeld, J. and Murauskaite, E. (eds.) (2023). *Escalation Management in International Crises: The United States Confronts its Adversaries*, Edward Elgar Publishing.

arms and providing auxiliary support to fighters, the decades of U.S. fighting against nonstate actors in the Middle East has consistently raised the ethical, legal, and political question of when exactly a civilian is to be considered an (enemy) combatant (thus becoming a legitimate military target). While fully cognizant of the ambiguity, this article nevertheless refers to non-military persons who choose to take up arms in resistance as *civilians*. However, portions of the literature presented below, discussing the will to fight as applicable to civilians participating in armed resistance, would also be relevant to military units. Regarding the lower boundary of resistance, many of the Soviet occupied republics continue to grapple with their Cold War experiences: visibly challenging the regime attracted heavy punishment and the known dissidents have been honored upon the dissolution of the USSR. Yet, revisiting memory politics from the safety of independent states, many civilians have started to retroactively (self-)identify their activities as quiet resistance — claiming to only have paid lip service to the regime while garnering resistance from inside the structures they had joined, privately holding contrarian beliefs despite nominally performing the prescribed functions.<sup>3</sup> The latter makes it difficult to authenticate the known collaborator activities, and also raises the question whether everyone is to be considered a resister by the simple virtue of staying and surviving in an occupied territory.

In light of considerable and renewed interest in civilian resilience and resistance in the face of conflict, this article seeks to expand the set of analytical lenses available for understanding this complex set of issues. Following this introduction, Section 2 highlights the relevant insights from a broad problem set in international relations that can inform the research on civilian resistance efforts; this represents a high-level mapping of the issues and a scoping guide. Section 3 zeroes in on specific factors driving (or suppressing) civilian resistance, drawing on the latest studies in this specific field. Section 4 looks at several institutional and organizational state-level aspects of civilian resistance efforts in Ukraine seen since 2022. While many of the insights can be applied to both violent and nonviolent resistance activities, with the violent ones constituting a higher threshold and significantly higher stakes, Section 5 explores the aspects unique to nonviolent resistance in greater depth. Theoretical material is presented along with a review of public surveys on the willingness to engage in the spectrum of resistance activities. There is some inevitable structural overlap throughout the study, with certain academic insights discussed from multiple theoretical bases and the lessons to be drawn from the war in Ukraine featuring prominently as the most current example of civilian resistance efforts.

## 2. Interdisciplinary Insights and Where to Find Them

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This cluster of relevant research examines the factors affecting the willingness of civilians to bear arms in various types of armed conflict and thereby contribute to armed resistance efforts. These factors include democratic values, ideology and nationalism, and whether survival is at stake. Insights from this body of literature can help inform expectations about armed civilian behavior under particular circumstances and the associated challenges, as well as identify shaping opportunities.

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<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., discussions classifying certain Lithuanian artists as “semi-non-conformists”, looking for finer gradation between resistance and collaboration: Andriuskevicius, A. (1997). *Lietuviu daile 1975–1995*. Vilniaus dailes akademijos leidykla.

## 2.1 Democratic Values

In examining interstate relations, democratic peace theory has been a popular,<sup>4</sup> if contested,<sup>5</sup> explanation for declining global propensity to wage war. Liberal democratic values and norms, including placing a premium on individual quality of life and prosperity, were seen as ever less compatible with not only the large-scale loss of life, but also the national budgetary allocation requirements (towards the military-industrial complex and away from social services, education, etc.) of conventional warfare.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the collective experience of long-term peaceful existence seems to have also resulted in very limited willingness on the individual level to sacrifice personally and defend these values and lifestyles, as reflected in regular European value surveys,<sup>6</sup> as well as academic research.<sup>7</sup> Consider comparing an average citizen of, e.g., Iraq vs. the Netherlands: it may seem that a Dutch person would have more to lose and thus ought to be more willing to fight for one's country; yet, empirically, it seems that having less of a gap to close between wartime vs. usual daily existence facilitates the shift to a willingness to sacrifice. This is by no means to suggest that an Iraqi life is less valuable than a Dutch one, but rather to reflect upon the potential explanations of the self-reported civilian willingness to resist an occupying force, particularly in a violent manner. Nevertheless, the long-peace and quality of life effect seems to be at least partially reversible by proximity to battle or a potential battlefield — this could help explain relatively higher willingness to participate in an armed resistance in prosperous democratic Scandinavian countries, compared to the rest of Europe.<sup>8</sup>

More generally, the normative threshold<sup>9</sup> to cross from a peaceful routine into taking up arms and potentially taking someone's life (or having one's life threatened) is enormous. To appreciate the strength of such normative proscriptions, one may consider numerous cases of Western foreign fighters who express explicit discomfort of

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<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Lake, D. A. (1992). Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War. *American Political Science Review*, 86(1), 24-38; Oneal, J. R. and Russett, B. M. (1997). The Classical Liberals were Right: Democracy, Interdependence, and Conflict, 1950-1985. *International Studies Quarterly*, 41, 267-294.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Heo, U. and Tan, A. C. (2001). Democracy and economic growth: A causal analysis. *Comparative Politics*, 33(4), 63-473.

<sup>6</sup> Halman, L. (March 2009). Value change in Western European societies: Results from the European Values Study. *Journal of Statistical Software*, 35-47.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242221510\\_Value\\_change\\_in\\_Western\\_European\\_societies\\_Results\\_from\\_the\\_European\\_values\\_study](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242221510_Value_change_in_Western_European_societies_Results_from_the_European_values_study).

<sup>7</sup> Inglehart, R. F., Puranen, B., and Welzel, C. (2015). Declining willingness to fight for one's country: The individual-level basis of the long peace. *Journal of Peace Research*, 52(4): 418-434; Paez, D., Liu, J. H., Bobowik, M., Basabe, N., and Hanke, K. (2016). Social Representations of History, Cultural Values, and Willingness to Fight in A War: A Collective-Level Analysis in 40 Nations. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 19(4), 347-361. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajsp.12153>; Anderson, C. J., Getmansky, A., and Hirsch-Hoefler, S. (2018). Burden Sharing: Income, Inequality and the Willingness to Fight. *British Journal of Political Science* 50(1), 363-379. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123417000679>.

<sup>8</sup> Inglehart, R. F., Puranen, B., and Welzel, C. (2015). Declining willingness to fight for one's country: The individual-level basis of the long peace. *Journal of Peace Research*, 52(4): 418-434.

<sup>9</sup> Tomz, M. (2007). Domestic audience costs in international relations: an experimental approach. *International Organization*, 61(4), 821-840; Bueno de Mesquita, B., and Lalman, D. (1992). *War and Reason: Domestic and International Imperatives*. Yale University Press.



resorting to arms or violence in their peaceful home countries prior to departing to a war zone abroad, as well as upon their return.<sup>10</sup>

Historically in military studies, the theater of war has been clearly defined in territorial and temporal terms, with different legal norms governing the use of force (e.g., civilian trials for battery or murder vs. military court rulings on a soldier's conduct). Indeed, some military planners consider special forces units as central for preparatory activities in training and equipping potential resistance units, and thus talk about the process — secretive, including alternative governance plans and use of force — as increasingly incompatible with democratic societies.<sup>11</sup> The normative challenge of breaking the violence taboo has affected not only considerations about prospective resistance, but even conventional military decisions of democratic countries through audience costs<sup>12</sup>: the United States, for instance, has struggled to justify at home the course of action that has been part of the war on terror, to say nothing of the backlash regarding the Vietnam war.

Studies of protracted conflicts<sup>13</sup> often note the challenges associated with moving between the theater of war and civilian spaces, particularly as the boundaries between the two are becoming increasingly blurry with the use of tools short of war (e.g., drone warfare, cyber offensives, etc.). For instance, the MENA region has been experiencing consecutive waves of violence since the 1990s, with men from multiple Arab countries coming to fight in a particular conflict zone (for a variety of socioeconomic, ideological, or relational reasons), and subsequently reusing these skills (and weapons) in another regional hotspot. The decades-long experience of living in a conflict zone has been linked to greater reported willingness to participate in armed resistance not only in the Middle East, but also countries such as India and the Philippines.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, the long-term lack of familiarity with a conflict environment also means a natural lack of associated skills and thus also a steeper learning curve for an average civilian deciding to (or forced to) join the resistance or defense efforts. In addition, experience of defeat in World War II was found to have a compounding impact upon this peace dividend: surveys of nationals of Germany, Japan, and Italy tend to show particularly low willingness to fight for their country.<sup>15</sup> Overall, while a protracted conflict may ease the breaking the violence taboo and increase the share of the population skilled in fighting and auxiliary support functions, the enormous resource depletion would hamper these effects, and the associated issue fatigue would negatively affect morale (both in the conflict zone and among external supporters).

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<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Murauskaite, E. E. (2020). Foreign Fighters in Ukraine: Assessing Potential Risks. VPAI. <https://vilniusinstitute.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/FOREIGN-FIGHTERS-IN-UKRAINE-ASSESSING-POTENTIAL-RISKS.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Stringer, K. D. (2018). Conclusions. In Stringer, K. D. and Napier, G. F. (eds.). *Resistance Views: Tartu Resistance Seminar Essays on Unconventional Warfare and Small State Resistance*. JSOU Press.

<sup>12</sup> Fisher, U. (2007). Deterrence, terrorism, and American values. *Homeland Security Affairs*, 3(1). <https://www.hsaj.org/resources/uploads/2022/05/3.1.4.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., Brecher, M. (2016). *The World of Protracted Conflicts*. London, UK: Lexington Books.

<sup>14</sup> Reznik, O. (2023). The willingness of Ukrainians to fight for their own country on the eve of the 2022 Russian invasion. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 39(5), 329-346, DOI: 10.1080/1060586X.2023.2221592.

<sup>15</sup> Inglehart, R. F., Puranen, B., and Welzel, C. (2015). Declining willingness to fight for one's country: The individual-level basis of the long peace. *Journal of Peace Research*, 52(4): 418-434.

Finally, it is notable that even in crises short of war, when it comes to the nature of resistance campaigns, democratic societies have been shown to incline towards nonviolent civil resistance strategies, favoring them over violent rebellions.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.2 Ideology and Nationalism

The strength of, and identification with, the national identity is typically shown among the most influential factors affecting the willingness to defend it in various forms. Indeed, Huntington has pointed to “cultural identities and religious beliefs” as factors most likely to continue fueling global conflict, despite democratization and economic developments (i.e., countering the effects of democratic peace, discussed above).<sup>17</sup>

For instance, in Ukraine, the extent to which an individual identified as Ukrainian turned out to be strongest predictor of the willingness to sacrifice for its sake: the 2022 survey specified this as inclination to “suffer economic hardship, imprisonment, fighting, family loss, and dying”<sup>18</sup> — all of which are associated with resilience, and some more likely in case of taking part in resistance. Ukrainians have reportedly been “increasingly disillusioned with lofty claims of liberal democratic ideals and principles,”<sup>19</sup> with national pride, pro-national orientation and increasingly strong ethno-linguistic identity consistently listed among the key motivators in their willingness to take part in armed resistance.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, a number of studies construct related arguments around various aspects of social cohesion, rather than national identity. For instance, in a case study assessing barriers to social resilience in Estonia, mistrust between ethnic Estonians and non-Estonians was identified as key, along with significant regional disparities<sup>21</sup> — suggesting the lack of social cohesion may outweigh the benefits of a unifying national identity. Similarly, in a case study of a besieged Israeli community, social cohesion and local level cooperation played a key role, with the authors concisely reiterating that “community resilience does not have to be specifically created; it grows by itself. It is actually a by-product of the investment in community development in many areas, seemingly unrelated to resilience”.<sup>22</sup> In a case study of Palestinians, the willingness to take part in a resistance movement (particularly using violence) has been

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<sup>16</sup> Carrington, C. (2013). *Civil Resistance or Rebellion: The Impact of Country-Level Factors on Revolutionary Strategy*. Duke University. <https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/db4e4ef8-956d-4f09-9af2-42ad6e739ecb/content>.

<sup>17</sup> Huntington, S.P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Simon & Schuster.

<sup>18</sup> Atran, S. (July 11, 2022). *The Will to Fight*. Aeon. <https://aeon.co/essays/wars-are-won-by-peopewilling-to-fight-for-comrade-and-cause>.

<sup>19</sup> Norris, P. and Kizlova, K. (March 3rd, 2022). *What mobilises the Ukrainian resistance?* LSE. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2022/03/03/what-mobilises-the-ukrainian-resistance/>.

<sup>20</sup> Reznik, O. (2023). *The willingness of Ukrainians to fight for their own country on the eve of the 2022 Russian invasion*. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 39(5), 329-346, DOI: 10.1080/1060586X.2023.2221592; Bukkvoll, T. and Brundtland Steder, F. (2024). *War and the Willingness to Resist and Fight in Ukraine*. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 71(3), 245-258, DOI: 10.1080/10758216.2023.2277767.

<sup>21</sup> Jermalavičius, T. and Merle Parmak, M. (2014). *Societal Resilience: A Basis for Whole-of-Society Approach to National Security*. In Stringer, K. D. and Napier, G. F. (eds.) (2018). *Resistance Views: Tartu Resistance Seminar Essays on Unconventional Warfare and Small State Resistance*. The JSOU Press, 23-46.

<sup>22</sup> Ganor, M. and Ben-Lavy, Y. (Winter/Spring 2003). *Community Resilience: Lessons Derived from Gilo under Fire*. *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, 105-108. [https://www.bjpa.org/content/upload/bjpa/comm/COMMUNITY%20RESILIENCE\\_%20LESSONS%20DERIVED%20FROM%20GILO%20UNDER%20FIRE.pdf](https://www.bjpa.org/content/upload/bjpa/comm/COMMUNITY%20RESILIENCE_%20LESSONS%20DERIVED%20FROM%20GILO%20UNDER%20FIRE.pdf).



linked with an individual's professed values towards communal orientation, rather than self-enhancement.<sup>23</sup> In a study of the Italian civil war, ideology (such as nationalism) was shown to act as a pull factor, serving as a mechanism for translating shared grievances into a group identity, motivating the resistance.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, a recent study on Taiwan has found that the impact of perceived collective action (i.e., the willingness of others to resist) to be stronger than that of national identity.<sup>25</sup>

A notion related to ideological convictions is the perception of fighting for a just cause, often also linked to the notion of being a victim or defender (rather than the aggressor) in a conflict.<sup>26</sup> A series of asymmetric warfare studies, based on laboratory experiments with individuals, have shown that when an entity perceives itself as the victim under attack, contrary to expectations, the typical response is to resist and even escalate — even against stronger attackers.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, states exhibiting weak institutional capacity have shown particular propensity to fight back violently against their attackers;<sup>28</sup> this could be extrapolated to imply willingness of individuals to resist, including violently, since this demonstrable inclination is unlinked from state institutions. The argument about institutional unlinking from the willingness to resist violently is also supported by recent data from Ukraine, where in 2022, around 8 percent of the population reported willingness to join the armed forces and a greater share (14%) was willing to take up arms as part of a volunteer force.<sup>29</sup> Notably, an even greater part of the population was willing to resist nonviolently, but the willingness to take up arms increased to a dramatic 80 percent following the invasion.<sup>30</sup> These aspects are discussed in greater detail in the sections below.

Finally, a relevant series of studies to consider regarding an individual's willingness to sacrifice for a cause they perceive as greater than themselves (which nationalism and state survival could be considered to constitute) concerns terrorism and violent nonstate actors (VNSAs). Classical studies examining the motivational factors

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<sup>23</sup> Argo, T. N. (Feb 2009). Why Fight? Examining Self-Interested versus Communally-Oriented Motivations in Palestinian Resistance and Rebellion. *Security Studies*, 18(4). DOI:10.1080/09636410903368920.

<sup>24</sup> Costalli, S. and Ruggeri, A. (Fall 2015). Indignation, Ideologies, and Armed Mobilization: Civil War in Italy, 1943–45. *International Security*, 40(2), 119–157, DOI:10.1162/ISEC\_a\_00218.

<sup>25</sup> Wang, A. H.-E. and Eldemerdash, N. (2023). “National identity, willingness to fight, and collective action”. *Journal of Peace Research*, 60(5), 745–759; also see Paredes, B., Brinol, P., and Gomez, A. (2018). Identity Fusion Leads to Willingness to Fight and Die for the Group: The Moderating Impact of Being Informed of the Reasons behind Other Members' Sacrifice. *Self and Identity* 17(5), 517–530. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2017.1419503>.

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., Bartosiak, J., and Deni, J. R. (Nov. 3, 2022). On the Observation from the Battlefield in Ukraine.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmnwMjUEzQ>; Atran, S. (Oct. 12, 2022). Transcultural Predictors of Will to Fight. SMA General Speaker Session. <https://nsiteam.com/transcultural-predictors-of-willto-fight/>.

<sup>27</sup> Deck, C. and Sheremeta, R. M. (2012). Fight or flight? Defending against sequential attacks in the game of siege. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 56(6), 1069–1088; Clark, D. J. and Konrad, K. A. (2007). Asymmetric conflict: weakest link against best shot. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 51(3), 457–469.

<sup>28</sup> Murauskaite, E. E., Quinn, D., Wilkenfeld, J., Astorino-Courtois, A., and DeFrancisci, C. S. (2023). Regime, power, state capacity, and the use of violence in gray zone international crises. In Wilkenfeld, J. and Murauskaite, E. E. (eds.). *Escalation Management in International Crises*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

<sup>29</sup> Reznik, O. (2023). The willingness of Ukrainians to fight for their own country on the eve of the 2022 Russian invasion. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 39(5), 329–346, DOI: 10.1080/1060586X.2023.2221592.

<sup>30</sup> Rating (March 1st, 2022). National Poll: Ukraine at War.

[https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/obschenacionalnyy\\_opros\\_ukraina\\_v\\_usloviyah\\_voynny\\_1\\_marta\\_2022.html](https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/obschenacionalnyy_opros_ukraina_v_usloviyah_voynny_1_marta_2022.html).

behind suicide terrorism consider it to be a response to foreign occupation (often by powerful democratic states).<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the dynamics of militias and paramilitary groups — which would constitute forms of armed resistance, as depicted in Fig 1. above — have often been studied for insights into VNSA behavior.<sup>32</sup> Willingness to sacrifice for moral concepts that supersede protecting one's family,<sup>33</sup> including one's country and national identity,<sup>34</sup> has been shown to be among the key factors driving individuals towards violent actions — be it as part of a national army, armed resistance, or activities treated as acts of terrorism.

### 2.3 Survival at Stake

A broad spectrum of academic research has established that when an entity perceives a threat to its survival, its propensity to take risks rises significantly. In economics, the entities in question are generalized to overall rational actor individual behavior under prospect theory, whereby in a given situation the entity (e.g., person, business, or state) facing the greatest prospective losses will be the most prone to take risks.<sup>35</sup> Extending this to crises or war time behavior would imply that the party at risk of losing more — in terms of territory, population, perhaps its very existence — would be particularly inclined to fight back, including greater propensity for armed resistance among civilians. Similarly, research concerning asymmetric conflict has found the weaker parties (state, but particularly nonstate actors<sup>36</sup>) are more inclined to escalate, as their survival is at stake.<sup>37</sup> This includes attacking civilian targets of the stronger opponent due to the lack of options to engage military ones.<sup>38</sup> Such behavior would directly apply to a society under the threat of occupation or already suffering from one: lacking state-level tools to counter it, the individuals ought to be more inclined towards armed resistance, as a means of escalating in order to survive.

It is particularly helpful to consider the increasingly regular public surveys on the civilians' readiness to take up arms in defense of their country in this context: consistently, peacetime studies show relatively small percentages of different European populations willing to participate in armed resistance, albeit exposure to battle (actual experience

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<sup>31</sup> See e.g., Pape, R. (2005). *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. University of Chicago; Crenshaw, M. (1992). *How Terrorists Think: What Psychology can Contribute to Understanding Terrorism*. In L. Howard (Ed.). *Terrorism: Roots, Impact, Responses*. Praeger.

<sup>32</sup> See e.g., Gaston, E. and Derzsi-Horvath, A. (2017). *Iraq after ISIL: An Analysis of Local, Hybrid, and Sub-State Security Forces*. Global Public Policy Institute. <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-after-isil-analysis-local-hybrid-and-sub-state-security-forces>; Pettersson, T. and Eck, K. (2018). Organized violence, 1989–2017. *Journal of Peace Research*, 55(4), 535–547. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343318784101>.

<sup>33</sup> Kruglanski, A., and Gelfand, M. (2013). Motivation, Ideology, and the Social Process of Radicalization: A Social Science Minerva Project. *APS Observer*, 26 (4). <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/motivation-ideology-and-the-social-process-in-radicalization>.

<sup>34</sup> Atran, S., Sheikh, H. and Gomez, A. (2014). For Cause and Comrade: Devoted Actors and Willingness to Fight. *Cliodynamics*, 5(1): 41–57. doi:10.21237/C7clio5124900; Gomez, A., Lopez-Rodriguez, L., Sheikh, Ginges, H. J., Wilson, L., Waziri, H., Vazquez, A. Davis, R. and Atran, S. (2017). The Devoted Actor's Will to Fight and the Spiritual Dimension of Human Conflict. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 1(9): 673–679. doi:10.1038/s41562-017-0193-3.

<sup>35</sup> Kahneman, D. and Tversky, A. (1979). Prospect theory: an analysis of decision under risk. *Econometrica*, 47(2), 263–291.

<sup>36</sup> Pfaff, C. A. and Granfield, P. (March 27, 2018). "How (Not) to Fight Proxy Wars". *National Interest*. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-not-fight-proxy-wars-25102>.

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., De Nevers, R. (2007). Imposing international norms: great powers and norm enforcement. *International Studies Review*, 9, 53–80; Caprioli, M. and Trumbore, P. F. (2006). First use of violent force in militarized interstate disputes, 1980–2001. *Journal of Peace Research*, 43(6), 741–749.

<sup>38</sup> Byman, D. L., Waxman, M.C., and Larson, E. (1999). *Air Power as a Coercive Instrument*. Rand Corporation.

of it, growing prospects of one, and even historical experience) significantly shifts these preferences. For instance, in Ukraine, following the Russian invasion, in March 2022 the percentage of population reporting willingness to fight reached 80 percent — up from around 32 percent earlier that year.<sup>39</sup> Somewhat similarly, in a 2019 survey conducted in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, the self-reported willingness to take part in violent resistance in case of an invasion was between 7 and 15 percent, whereas in the early 1990s, with freshly won independence from the USSR, such willingness was reported as between 84 and 97 percent.<sup>40</sup> Even though these countries are not experiencing a conventional war, they are considered frontline states where such risk is heightened — yet, the propensity for armed resistance, as reported in peacetime, remains low.

## 3. Factors Driving Resistance: Insights from Ukraine

### 3.1 Demographic factors

Academic studies examining the factors that affect the propensity for resilience and resistance in Ukraine have consistently looked at gender, income, and age as potential explanatory demographic variables. However, the direction and extent of their impact differs significantly from one study to another — potentially due to challenges associated with wartime data sampling, and especially the divergence between self-reported attitudes in surveys and tangible numbers of persons showing up for certain tasks.

Using 2022 survey data, Reznik has found that women and older persons were less inclined to take part in armed resistance activities.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, based on Ukrainian Rating agency surveys of October 2020 vs. March 2022, women showed a more significant increase in willingness to fight once the war broke out (up from 48% to 73%) vs. men (73% to 90%).<sup>42</sup> Based on field interviews and observation, Krohley claims that women have been “front and center” of Ukrainian resistance,<sup>43</sup> while Bukkvoll and Steder’s data analysis showed no statistically significant impact of gender upon willingness to resist or fight.<sup>44</sup>

Regarding the impact of income, Reznik has found it to make little difference.<sup>45</sup> While there is a recognition that income inequality has a negative impact upon citizens’ willingness to defend their country, the extent of income

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<sup>39</sup> Bukkvoll, T. and Brundtland Steder, F. (2024). War and the Willingness to Resist and Fight in Ukraine. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 71(3), 245-258, DOI: 10.1080/10758216.2023.2277767.

<sup>40</sup> Andzans, M. and Spruds, A. (2020). Willingness to defend one’s country and to resist in the Baltic states. *Security and Defense Quarterly*, 3(30), 15-28. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.35467/sdq/124712>.

<sup>41</sup> Reznik, O. (2023). The willingness of Ukrainians to fight for their own country on the eve of the 2022 Russian invasion. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 39(5), 329-346, DOI: 10.1080/1060586X.2023.2221592.

<sup>42</sup> Rating (March 1st, 2022). National Poll: Ukraine at War.

[https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/obschenacionalnyy\\_opros\\_ukraina\\_v\\_usloviyah\\_voyny\\_1\\_marta\\_2022.html](https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/obschenacionalnyy_opros_ukraina_v_usloviyah_voyny_1_marta_2022.html).

<sup>43</sup> Krohley, N. (Feb 28, 2024). Ukrainian Civilians Are Pioneering the Art of Resistance. *Foreign Policy*.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/02/28/ukrainian-civilian-resistance-movements-women-war-mavkas/>.

<sup>44</sup> Bukkvoll, T. and Brundtland Steder, F. (2024). War and the Willingness to Resist and Fight in Ukraine. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 71(3), 245-258, DOI: 10.1080/10758216.2023.2277767.

<sup>45</sup> Reznik, O. (2023). The willingness of Ukrainians to fight for their own country on the eve of the 2022 Russian invasion. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 39(5), 329-346, DOI: 10.1080/1060586X.2023.2221592.

inequality and its potential impact in Ukraine remains highly debatable.<sup>46</sup> Bukkvol and Steder have found that a larger than expected portion of low-income persons in Ukraine were distinctly opposed to taking part in the resistance,<sup>47</sup> with other studies suggesting that rising economic deprivation would further erode public support as the war continues.<sup>48</sup>

A 2019 survey of the three Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) has found comparable impact of demographic variables: the willingness to defend their country was highest among male respondents and persons aged from 18 to 24, and, curiously, also among lower-educated persons (potentially, though not necessarily, also corresponding with lower levels of income).<sup>49</sup>

### 3.2 Conflict Duration

While the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has been going on since 2014, many of the activities were conducted in the deliberately ambiguous space between war and peace, with protracted gray zone warfare making it challenging to mobilize significant portions of the Ukrainian public for action.<sup>50</sup> However, the swift and clearly identifiable start of conventional war in February 2022 has been identified as a significant factor helping mobilize civilian resistance.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, there is a recognition about the historically short-lived nature of nation-wide social mobilization, with the currently high level of Ukrainian morale and support for resistance expected to decline in a protracted war.<sup>52</sup> This is consistent with research on factors eroding civilian resilience and willingness to resist in a protracted conflict, including increasing economic deprivation, lasting uncertainty and insecurity, social erosion, and psychological trauma.<sup>53</sup>

### 3.3 Proximity to the battlefield

It has become almost conventional wisdom to expect that the closer a person (or a state) would find themselves to a war zone, the greater and more immediate the threat, and thus their willingness to participate in the battle or other forms of resistance ought to be greater. This is the logic used to explain the greater reported willingness of

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<sup>46</sup> See, e.g., Cherep, O., Helman, V., and Makazan, E. (2022). Study of Indicators of the Level of Development of Material Well-Being of the Population, the Problem of Inequality and Poverty in Ukraine in the Context of Statistical Evaluation. *Baltic Journal of Economic Studies*, 8(2), 162–171. <https://doi.org/10.30525/2256-0742/2022-8-2-162-172>.

<sup>47</sup> Bukkvoll, T. and Brundtland Steder, F. (2024). War and the Willingness to Resist and Fight in Ukraine. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 71(3), 245-258, DOI: 10.1080/10758216.2023.2277767.

<sup>48</sup> Geopolitical Intelligence Services AG (Oct 4, 2023). Eyewitness to war: Assessing the Ukrainian capacity to fight. <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/ukraine-fighting-will/>.

<sup>49</sup> Andzans, M. and Spruds, A. (2020). Willingness to defend one's country and to resist in the Baltic states. *Security and Defense Quarterly*, 3(30), 15-28. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.35467/sdq/124712>.

<sup>50</sup> See, e.g., Wilkenfeld, J. and Murauskaite, E. (eds.) (2023). *Escalation Management in International Crises: The United States Confronts its Adversaries*, Edward Elgar Publishing.

<sup>51</sup> Petit, B. (Feb 1, 2024). Why Ukraine Is Not A Universal Resistance Model. *War on the Rocks*. <https://warontherocks.com/2024/02/why-ukraine-is-not-a-universal-resistance-model/>.

<sup>52</sup> Geopolitical Intelligence Services AG (Oct 4, 2023). Eyewitness to war: Assessing the Ukrainian capacity to fight. <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/ukraine-fighting-will/>.

<sup>53</sup> See, e.g., Justino, P. (Apr 14, 2022). The war in Ukraine: Civilian vulnerability, resilience, and resistance. Centre for Economic Policy Research. <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/war-ukraine-civilian-vulnerability-resilience-and-resistance>.

Scandinavians<sup>54</sup> and Eastern Europeans<sup>55</sup> to fight, compared to most other Europeans, and to imply the same would be true for Ukrainians.<sup>56</sup> However, fewer respondents in partially occupied Ukrainian territories reported willingness to take up arms, and the difference in their willingness to train to use light arms was around 51% (compared to 73% in Western Ukraine).<sup>57</sup> In addition, battlefield proximity outweighed socioeconomic factors, negatively impacting regional civic and institutional resilience in Ukraine.<sup>58</sup> Such counterintuitive data may suggest the dominant impact of the abovementioned trauma and deprivation. It could also point to a “freeze” or “flight” civilian response in the face of immediate existential threat — as opposed to the “fight” response found among state actors and violent nonstate actors discussed in Section 2.3. Significantly, it also offers curious nuance to country-level data, potentially suggesting the imminent *threat* of occupation may be what sparks the willingness to resist, whereas the actual occupation may be driving people into self- (rather than country-) preserving behaviors.

### 3.4 Foreign Support

Experts outside Ukraine, as well as Ukrainian troops and civilians, have reported significant impact of perceived foreign backing, strengthening the overall resilience of the country during the first year(s) of conventional war. The perception among Ukrainian civilians that Europe and the West were fighting alongside them correlated particularly closely with self-reported willingness to participate in resistance efforts, including armed resistance.<sup>59</sup> The perceived support came in the form of both foreign diplomatic efforts and the provision of military assistance. Among Ukrainian fighters, seeing the battlefield developments reported so closely on international media during the initial stages of war in 2022 was identified as a significant morale booster.<sup>60</sup> Finally, expert observers outside Ukraine have concurred about the significance of foreign material support to the war effort — albeit it was seen as a contributing, rather than a decisive factor, affecting morale more than battlefield outcomes.<sup>61</sup> This positive impact of foreign support may be related to the collective action impetus and may also act to validate the justness of cause, as described in Section 2.2 above. Significantly, this effect is enabled by continued access to communication channels, as discussed below.

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<sup>54</sup> Reznik, O. (2023). The willingness of Ukrainians to fight for their own country on the eve of the 2022 Russian invasion. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 39(5), 329-346, DOI: 10.1080/1060586X.2023.2221592.

<sup>55</sup> Andzans, M. and Spruds, A. (2020). Willingness to defend one’s country and to resist in the Baltic states. *Security and Defense Quarterly*, 3(30), 15-28. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.35467/sdq/124712>.

<sup>56</sup> Norris, P. and Kizlova, K. (March 3rd, 2022). What mobilises the Ukrainian resistance? LSE. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2022/03/03/what-mobilises-the-ukrainian-resistance/>.

<sup>57</sup> Bukkvoll, T. and Brundtland Steder, F. (2024). War and the Willingness to Resist and Fight in Ukraine. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 71(3), 245-258, DOI: 10.1080/10758216.2023.2277767.

<sup>58</sup> Rabinovych, M., Brik, T., Darkovich, A., Savisko, M., Hatsko, V., Tytiuk, S., and Piddubnyi, I. (Oct 6, 2023). Explaining Ukraine’s resilience to Russia’s invasion: The role of local governance. *Governance*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12827>.

<sup>59</sup> Bukkvoll, T. and Brundtland Steder, F. (2024). War and the Willingness to Resist and Fight in Ukraine. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 71(3), 245-258, DOI: 10.1080/10758216.2023.2277767.

<sup>60</sup> Lee, R. (Sep 28, 2022). FY22 Q4 Future of SOF Forum/Future Security Forum: Panel 6: What are the Lessons of the War in Ukraine? [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLNQ215A\\_nc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLNQ215A_nc).

<sup>61</sup> Geopolitical Intelligence Services AG (Oct 4, 2023). Eyewitness to war: Assessing the Ukrainian capacity to fight. <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/ukraine-fighting-will/>.

### 3.5 Communications

The significance of continued access to communication channels in Ukraine throughout the war (thanks to foreign assistance) have been extensively discussed in light of intelligence sharing with the West and various information campaigns.<sup>62</sup> However, its impact on a broad spectrum of contemporary resistance is difficult to overstate. This has consistently been identified as a factor strengthening Ukrainian public resilience,<sup>63</sup> with counter-evidence of low morale and limited resilience observed in Russian-occupied territories that had lost access to external communications.<sup>64</sup> More directly, anonymous digital civil society networks have been more successful at facilitating nonviolent resistance efforts than more traditional physical ones cultivated prior to the start of the war, with thousands of Ukrainians able to share best practices, access messaging boards and other relevant information, and even organize for intelligence sharing and sabotage activities.<sup>65</sup> The crucial role of online social networks in organizing mass public dissent was already seen a decade earlier during the Arab Spring.<sup>66</sup> Seemingly Ukraine is becoming a showcase how online activism (including AI facilitation<sup>67</sup>) can take such efforts one step further, enabling and expanding the basis for safe civilian participation in a variety of resistance efforts — including foreign crowdfunding and recruitment.<sup>68</sup>

### 3.6 Leadership impact

The “rally ‘round the flag” effect,<sup>69</sup> whereby the leadership of a country at war enjoys a sudden spike in popularity and a nation-unifying impact, has been seen in case studies since World War I. In a recent case study assessing Estonian social resilience, the quality of leadership (across public and private sectors) was seen among the key enhancing factors, along with the quality of crisis communication.<sup>70</sup> The “rally ‘round the flag” effect has been documented on both sides of the Russia-Ukraine war, with Ukrainians experiencing a positive impact on mobilizing the resistance efforts, while in Russia personal leadership appeals have bolstered army recruitment. In Russia

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<sup>62</sup> Murauskaitė, E. E. (Feb 2023). U.S. Assistance to Ukraine in the Information Space: Intelligence, Cyber, and Signaling. START UMD. [https://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/publications/local\\_attachments/ATAC%20-%20U.S.%20Assistance%20to%20Ukraine%20in%20the%20Information%20Space.pdf](https://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/publications/local_attachments/ATAC%20-%20U.S.%20Assistance%20to%20Ukraine%20in%20the%20Information%20Space.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> Rondeaux, C. (Sep 28, 2022). FY22 Q4 Future of SOF Forum/Future Security Forum:Panel 6 What are the Lessons of the War in Ukraine? [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLNQ215A\\_nc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLNQ215A_nc).

<sup>64</sup> Avdeeva, M. (Oct. 19, 2022). Russia-Ukraine Dialogues: Battlefield Updates. LSE. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qow33e-IQFM>.

<sup>65</sup> Krohley, N. (Feb 28, 2024). Ukrainian Civilians Are Pioneering the Art of Resistance. Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/02/28/ukrainian-civilian-resistance-movements-women-war-mavkas/>.

<sup>66</sup> See, e.g., Howard, P. N. and Hussain, M. M. (2013). *Democracy’s Fourth Wave? Digital Media and the Arab Spring*. Oxford University Press. [https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/117564/Democracy's Fourth Wave.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/117564/Democracy's%20Fourth%20Wave.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y); Tufekci, Z. and Wilson, C. (Sep 2011). The Revolutions Were Tweeted: Information Flows during the 2011 Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions. *International Journal of Communication*, 5(5), 1375-1405.

<sup>67</sup> Krohley, N. (Feb 28, 2024). Ukrainian Civilians Are Pioneering the Art of Resistance. Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/02/28/ukrainian-civilian-resistance-movements-women-war-mavkas/>.

<sup>68</sup> Franke, U. (Feb 21, 2024). Technological change in the war in Ukraine — what lessons for NATO allies? EESC. <https://www.eesc.lt/en/publication/technological-change-in-the-war-in-ukraine-what-lessons-for-nato-allies/>.

<sup>69</sup> Goldstein, J. S. and Pevehouse, J. C. (2008). *International Relations* (8th Ed.). Pearson Longman.

<sup>70</sup> Jermalavičius, T. and Merle Parmak, M. (2014). Societal Resilience: A Basis for Whole-of-Society Approach to National Security. In Stringer, K. D. and Napier, G. F. (eds.) (2018). *Resistance Views: Tartu Resistance Seminar Essays on Unconventional Warfare and Small State Resistance*. The JSOU Press, 23-46.



Vladimir Putin enjoyed a boost in ratings at the start of the intervention in Ukraine in 2014 (from 61% public approval in November 2013 to 88% by October 2014); a similar, albeit smaller impact, has also been observed at the launching of conventional invasion in 2022 (his approval ratings went up from 69% in January 2022 to 83% in March 2022).<sup>71</sup> For Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the percentage of population strongly approving of him was a mere 12% in March 2021, jumping up to 74% by April 2022.<sup>72</sup> Zelenskyy's decision to stay, rather than move to exile, as the country came under conventional military attack has been widely credited with boosting the morale of Ukrainians (both civilians and troops) to resist the Russian incursion.<sup>73</sup> The resistance mobilizing effect in Ukraine has reportedly been further strengthened by personal activism and leadership examples among business and political elites.<sup>74</sup>

### 3.7 Anger

The impact of emotions in social unrest, as well as online activism and user engagement, has been increasingly examined from a multitude of disciplinary vantage points.<sup>75</sup> Anger, in particular, has been identified as an activating emotion that motivates persons towards action (both online and in the real world), especially when combined with narratives on injustice.<sup>76</sup> Historical resentments and geopolitical tensions tend to foster environments opportune for such righteous anger. Indignation and related emotions have been described as push factors, e.g., mobilizing individuals towards involvement in a civil war, with ideology acting as a pull factor.<sup>77</sup> For instance, in 250 interviews with civilians who got involved in conflicts in Bosnia, Gaza, Libya, and Somalia, outrage at the targeting of peaceful

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<sup>71</sup> Statista Research Department (May 21, 2024). Vladimir Putin's approval rating in Russia monthly 1999-2024. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/896181/putin-approval-rating-russia/>.

<sup>72</sup> Statista Research Department (Sep 19, 2023). Volodymyr Zelenskyy's approval rating in Ukraine 2019-2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1100076/volodymyr-zelensky-s-approval-rating-ukraine/>.

<sup>73</sup> Onuch, O. and Hale, H. E. (2022). *The Zelensky Effect*. Hurst Publishers; Gordon.ua (Sep 16, 2022). Interview with Dmytro Kuleba. <https://gordonua.com/ukr/live/vibuhi-u-krimu-areshtovich-kuliba-fatalna-pomilka-putina-krimskij-mist-interv-ju-batsman-iz-gordonom-transljatsija-1621765.html>; Prasad, A. (March 2, 2022). Volodymyr Zelensky's Appeal Lies in His Service to Ukrainians Above All Else. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/volodymyr-zelenskys-appeal-lies-in-hisservice-to-ukrainians-above-all-else-178012>; Pisano, J. (July 2022). How Zelensky has changed Ukraine. *Journal of Democracy*. <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/how-zelensky-haschanged-ukraine/>.

<sup>74</sup> Bartosiak, J. and Deni, J. R. (Nov 3, 2022). On the Observation from the Battlefield in Ukraine. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmnwMjIUEzQ>; McNerney, M., Sharpe, A., and Demus, A. (Sep. 13, 2022). National Will to Fight Amid 2020s/30s Technologies. *NSI*. <https://nsiteam.com/national-will-to-fight-amid-2020s-30s-technologies/>.

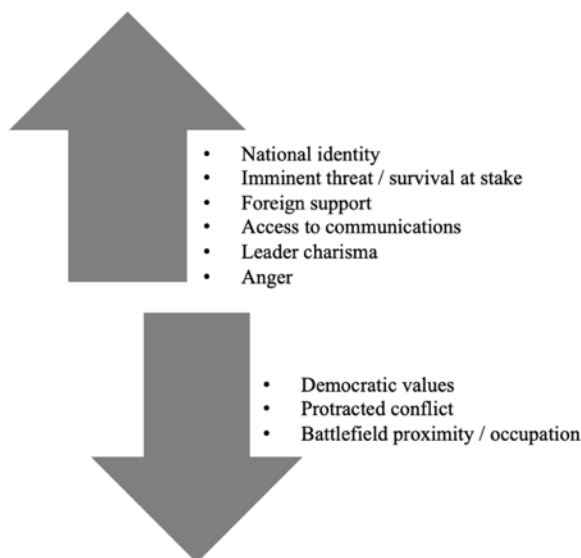
<sup>75</sup> See, e.g., van Zomeren, M., Postmes, T., and Spears, R. (2008). Toward an integrative social identity model of collective action: A quantitative research synthesis of three sociopsychological perspectives. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134(4): 504–535. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.134.4.504>; Casas, A., and Webb Williams, N. (2019). Images that Matter: Online Protests and the Mobilizing Role of Pictures. *Political Research Quarterly*, 72(2): 360–375. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912918786805>; Berger, J., and Milkman, K. L. (2012). What makes online content viral? *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49(2), 192–205. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.10.0353>.

<sup>76</sup> Paletz, S. B. F. (Ed.) (2018). *Measuring emotions in social media: Examining the relationship between emotional content and propagation*. University of Maryland Center for Advanced Study of Language; van Zomeren, M., Postmes, T., and Spears, R. (2008). Toward an integrative social identity model of collective action: A quantitative research synthesis of three sociopsychological perspectives. *Psychological Bulletin* 134(4): 504–535. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.134.4.504>.

<sup>77</sup> Costalli, S. and Ruggeri, A. (Fall 2015). Indignation, Ideologies, and Armed Mobilization: Civil War in Italy, 1943–45, *International Security*, 40(2), 119–157. doi:10.1162/ISEC\_a\_00218.

protesters was identified among the top five motivating factors.<sup>78</sup> Interestingly, a RAND study of factors shaping the will to fight of military personnel, two emotional drivers — revenge and desperation — were listed among the key individual-level variables.<sup>79</sup> Recent socio-political research has shown that in Lithuania (a NATO front line state previously occupied by Russia), national broadcaster and social media discourse concerning Russia is particularly permeated with anger.<sup>80</sup> In Ukraine, such righteous anger has reportedly had an impact in mobilizing civilian resistance — it is related to the notion of being the victim in a conflict and fighting for the just cause (as discussed in Section 2.2). The specific narratives mostly relate to anger about Putin denying Ukrainian identity and historical nationhood,<sup>81</sup> which could be construed as an activating booster for the nationalism factor.

**Figure 2: Summary of Factors Driving and Thwarting (Armed) Resistance**



## 4. Organizing Resistance: Ukraine Deep Dive

With broad international recognition of the success and breadth of Ukrainian civilian resilience and resistance, this section discusses several structural aspects that are seen as having contributed to its success. These insights are offered with a sober appreciation that their applicability in other contextual environments may be limited due to

<sup>78</sup> Boehland, N. (2015). *The People's Perspectives: Civilian Involvement in Armed Conflict*. Center for Civilians in Conflict. [https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Peoples\\_Perspectives\\_WebFinal.pdf](https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Peoples_Perspectives_WebFinal.pdf).

<sup>79</sup> Connable, B., McNerney, M. J., Marcellino, W., Frank, A. B., Hargrove, H., Posard, M. N., Zimmerman, S. R., Lander, N., Castillo, J. J., and Sladden, J. (Sep 13, 2019). *Will to Fight: Returning to the Human Fundamentals of War*. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_briefs/RB10040.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB10040.html).

<sup>80</sup> Murauskaite, E. E., Johns, M. A., Paletz, S. B. F., and Pandža, N. B. (2023). How does it feel to talk about Russia? Emotions and themes in Russia-related social media posts in Lithuania. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2023.2257172>.

<sup>81</sup> Norris, P. and Kizlova, K. (March 3rd, 2022). *What mobilises the Ukrainian resistance?* LSE. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2022/03/03/what-mobilises-the-ukrainian-resistance/>; Petit, B. (Feb 1, 2024). *Why Ukraine Is Not A Universal Resistance Model*. *War on the Rocks*. <https://warontherocks.com/2024/02/why-ukraine-is-not-a-universal-resistance-model/>.

different historical, national, and structural endowments. Nevertheless, this case does provide valuable insights (on both the dos and the don'ts) as the most recent European case of civilian resistance against a foreign occupation.

#### 4.1 Legal Measures and Violent Resistance

The Ukrainian state has played a somewhat unique role in legitimating and encouraging violent resistance efforts across the entire spectrum (as depicted in Figure 1 above). The conflict below the threshold of war has been ongoing since 2015, prompting local Ukrainians to take up arms, and also attracting a broad spectrum of international participants — auxiliary supporters (e.g., medical staff and NGOs delivering supplies to fighters), untrained individual fighters, as well as experienced foreign military veterans and privateers, joining a variety of fighter units.<sup>82</sup> At the time, many countries were struggling to define their legal approach towards citizens departing to support the Ukrainian war efforts (in any form): while Ukrainian resistance garnered international political support, the decades-long experience of radicalized individuals from Western countries joining the global jihad movement, as well as the far right, spurred fears and challenged their legal frameworks.<sup>83</sup> Following Russia's conventional invasion in February 2022, Ukraine proclaimed the formation of the International Legion for the Territorial Defense of Ukraine, actively encouraging foreigners to join the fight — while the phenomenon of foreign fighters had been historically common in, e.g., the Spanish civil war or Afghanistan, other official state bodies had not attempted to legalize their ranks. However, the actual international recognition of the legal status of foreigners fighting in Ukraine remains murky. Russia had outright declared them all mercenaries, refusing any due legal protections.<sup>84</sup> Many of their countries of origin seem to be handling each case individually, with considerable diplomatic and political challenges involved in the treatment of wounded or captured citizens.<sup>85</sup> Finally, in Ukraine, foreign fighters unable to safely return to their home states had not been granted citizenship, and their service reportedly was not even counted as a bonus when applying for residency or refuge<sup>86</sup> — it is only in 2024 that a parliamentary bill has been proposed to allow them dual citizenship,<sup>87</sup> along with another initiative put forward to legalize private military companies.<sup>88</sup>

When it comes to legal measures concerning the citizens of Ukraine in violent resistance, following Russia's invasion in February 2024, men aged 18–60 have been banned from leaving the country (i.e., legally preventing

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<sup>82</sup> Murauskaite, E. E. (March 2020). Foreign Fighters in Ukraine: Assessing Potential Risks. Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis (VPAI). <https://vilniusinstitute.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/FOREIGN-FIGHTERS-IN-UKRAINE-ASSESSING-POTENTIAL-RISKS.pdf>.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> See, e.g., Malet, D. (March 15, 2022). The Risky Status of Ukraine's Foreign Fighters. Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/15/ukraine-war-foreign-fighters-legion-volunteers-legal-status/>.

<sup>85</sup> See, e.g., Mehra, T. and Thorley, A. (July 11, 2022). Foreign Fighters, Foreign Volunteers and Mercenaries in the Ukrainian Armed Conflict. International Center for Counter-Terrorism. <https://www.icct.nl/publication/foreign-fighters-foreign-volunteers-and-mercenaries-ukrainian-armed-conflict>.

<sup>86</sup> See, e.g., Pikulicka-Wilczewska, A. (May 21, 2024). Belarusians who fought against Russia with Ukraine face new battle. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/21/belarusians-who-fought-against-russia-with-ukraine-face-new-battle>.

<sup>87</sup> (Jan 22, 2024). Zelenskiy Proposes Bill Allowing Ukrainian Citizenship For Foreign Fighters. Radio Free Europe. <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-foreign-fighters-citizenship-zelensky/32786522.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Ukraine may have its own PMCs: how will they function? Visit Ukraine. <https://visitukraine.today/blog/3885/ukraine-may-have-its-own-pmcs-how-will-they-function#why-do-they-want-to-legalise-military-companies>.

them from a choice of emigration), with consecutive efforts mobilizing them for service in the national military. As the war efforts wore on, Ukraine has also taken legal measures in an attempt to force Ukrainians residing abroad to return and report for service by refusing to renew their passports outside the country.<sup>89</sup> It is worth noting that the martial law of 2022, as well as subsequent mobilization efforts, have highlighted the discrepancy between the prevailing traditional gender roles in Ukraine (as well as Russia) versus the government efforts of greater women's involvement in armed and nonviolent resistance, as well as women's active participation in these efforts.<sup>90</sup> Namely, the mobilization of men and legal prohibition to leave has placed a disproportionate burden on the care for children and the elderly upon women,<sup>91</sup> who comprise the majority of Ukrainians in exile. Moreover, since the start of the conventional war in 2022, Ukrainian civilian men have been disproportionately targeted by Russian armed forces, with gender automatically associated with combatant roles<sup>92</sup>: as of February 2024, adult men accounted for 59% of those injured and 62% of those killed (the boys dominated even among child casualties).<sup>93</sup>

In addition to the legal measures prompting Ukrainian men towards national armed services, in 2022 the Territorial Defense Force (TDF) has been formally recognized as its additional branch — incorporating local reservists, veterans, and self-trained civilian volunteers.<sup>94</sup> Foreign veterans have played a prominent role (especially in early 2022) in providing training to TDF units,<sup>95</sup> as well as teaching combat, self-defense, and survival skills to Ukrainian civilians through other self-organized and NGO groupings.<sup>96</sup>

Finally, to support civilian resistance by enhancing survival and self-defense skills, a number of state and nonstate actors in Ukraine have started actively offering trainings and courses. These range from courses to women, youth, and elderly persons on providing first aid and avoiding unexploded ordnance, to learning to shoot various types of guns<sup>97</sup> (including instructions to school children<sup>98</sup>). Public and widely available offering of such trainings, including through state institutions, acts as a legitimating and prompting factor in civilian violent resistance efforts, while

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<sup>89</sup> Lawless, J. and Novikov, I. (Apr 25, 2024). Ukraine is putting pressure on fighting-age men outside the country as it tries to replenish forces. Associated Press. <https://apnews.com/article/ukraine-russia-war-conscription-law-poland-0357b7f90095c8bfaad1ec16a4b7a66>.

<sup>90</sup> Trisko Darden, J. (Jan-Feb 2023). Ukrainian wartime policy and the construction of women's combatant status. *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2022.102665>.

<sup>91</sup> Cindoglu, D. (Apr 26, 2022). Even once female Ukrainian refugees reach safety, they face new burdens as single heads of household. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/even-once-female-ukrainian-refugees-reach-safety-they-face-new-burdens-as-single-heads-of-household-179544>.

<sup>92</sup> See, e.g., Carpenter, R. C. (2003). 'Women and children first': Gender, norms and humanitarian evacuation in the Balkans 1991–1995. *International Organization*, 57 (4), 661–694.

<sup>93</sup> (Feb 15, 2024) Two Year Update: Protection of civilians: impact of hostilities on civilians since 24 February 2022. UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/two-year-update-protection-civilians-impact-hostilities-civilians-24.pdf>.

<sup>94</sup> Kossov, I. (Feb 13, 2022). Ukraine's new military branch: Citizens protecting their neighborhood. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-russia-military-citizen-reservist-defense/>.

<sup>95</sup> Bishop, M. W. (March 12, 2022). U.S. Veterans Start a 'Resistance Academy' in Ukraine. Will It Backfire? *Rolling Stone*. <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/american-veterans-resistance-academy-ukraine-1319830/>.

<sup>96</sup> Kryt, J. (May 30, 2022). Here's How Ex-U.S. Special Forces Are Training Civilians to Crush Putin's Army. *Daily Beast*. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/heres-how-ex-us-special-forces-are-training-civilians-to-crush-putins-army>.

<sup>97</sup> Civil defense: where to study to be ready for everything? *Rubryka*. <https://rubryka.com/en/article/civil-protection-courses/>.

<sup>98</sup> Brovko, A. (Aug 1, 2022). 'You Need To Know How To Shoot': Lviv Students Are Taught The ABCs Of Self-Defense. *Radio Free Europe*. <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-children-war-russia-security-/31969169.html>.

medical aid and survival skill training enhances their resilience even in cases when no resistance activities, violent or nonviolent, would be conducted.

Notably, among the legal steps taken to prevent Ukrainian citizens from choosing a conformist approach, between March 2022 and May 2024 the Office of the Prosecutor General has opened 8,091 criminal cases against “collaborators,” with 322 convictions handed out.<sup>99</sup> The latter course of action was pursued by Ukrainian authorities despite reports of the convicted persons of acting out of fear of Russian reprisals, and international observers acknowledging the occupying power’s compelling of the proscribed activities.<sup>100</sup>

Overall, while the legal measures described in this section have arguably succeeded in prompting Ukrainian citizens towards various forms of violent resistance and acted as a deterrent (for men) from their choosing of exile or conformism, the legitimacy of these measures in the context of international law has been questioned. Furthermore, while Ukraine has widely campaigned to attract women and foreign citizens into joining its violent resistance activities, the political position and media campaigns have not gone hand in hand with the local institutional and legal approach (although that seemingly hasn’t had an adverse impact on foreigner recruitment, it has left those who chose to serve in a precarious position).

## 4.2 Cross-Sectional Engagement

Another factor frequently mentioned as a significant booster of Ukrainian efforts in countering Russia has been the broad and varied engagement across social and governmental strata. Referencing a variety of Western discourses, the joint engagement of the military, government, and civilians could be understood from the angles of integrated resistance,<sup>101</sup> public-private partnerships,<sup>102</sup> horizontal and vertical links<sup>103</sup> (within and between these structures), and decentralized networks at play.<sup>104</sup> With great international interest in nonviolent forms of resistance in Ukrainian civil society, these variously termed approaches have been applied to show how the ongoing war has highlighted the strengths in cases where such synergies have already been in place to leverage or have swiftly emerged. However, the weaknesses have been made just as painfully clear, where the lack of coordination and resource depletion has compounded various adverse effects of the war.

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<sup>99</sup> (July 3, 2024). Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine. UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. pp. 21-22. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2024/24-07-02-OHCHR-39th-periodic-report-Ukraine.pdf>.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> See, e.g., Krohley, N. (Feb 28, 2024). Ukrainian Civilians Are Pioneering the Art of Resistance. Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/02/28/ukrainian-civilian-resistance-movements-women-war-mavkas/>.

<sup>102</sup> See, e.g., Lutsevych, O. (June 2024). Ukraine’s wartime recovery and the role of civil society. Chatham House. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/2024-06-05-ukraine-wartime-recovery-role-civil-society-lutsevych.pdf.pdf>.

<sup>103</sup> See, e.g., Rabinovych, M., Brik, T., Darkovich, A., Savisko, M., Hatsko, V., Tytiuk, S., and Piddubnyi, I. (Oct 6, 2023). Explaining Ukraine’s resilience to Russia’s invasion: The role of local governance. *Governance*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12827>.

<sup>104</sup> Kepe, M., and Demus, A. (Aug 15, 2023). Resisting Russia. RAND. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA2034-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2034-1.html); Rabinovych, M., Brik, T., Darkovich, A., Savisko, M., Hatsko, V., Tytiuk, S., and Piddubnyi, I. (Oct 6, 2023). Explaining Ukraine’s resilience to Russia’s invasion: The role of local governance. *Governance*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12827>.

Civil-military cooperation has raised particularly complex issues related to genuine versus forced civilian participation in auxiliary resistance efforts. On the one hand, Amnesty International has condemned<sup>105</sup> the consistent<sup>106</sup> practice of Ukraine's armed forces of storing weapons at, and setting up attacks from, civilian homes, as well as medical or education facilities in regions close to the active fighting areas — thus subjecting civilians to Russian shelling. Asymmetric warfare tactics by a disadvantaged defending force can be understood, although deliberate blurring of civilian-military boundaries is hardly legally defensible. Civilians were typically not consulted and were often actively opposed to the military operating from residential facilities in question.<sup>107</sup> Effectively, this implies co-optation of civilians into auxiliary resistance activities through forced civilian-military enmeshment. This controversial practice stands in contrast to substantial genuine support to the military by civilians: many Ukrainians were willing to provide financial and other material assistance to the fighting forces, as a way of taking part in auxiliary resistance efforts.<sup>108</sup> In addition to anecdotal morale-boosting effects of mediatized individual acts of sabotage,<sup>109</sup> nonviolent community-level auxiliary support in the form of intelligence sharing, as well as (re)building entrenchments and infrastructure, has reportedly had a palpable impact.<sup>110</sup> In addition, Ukrainian institutions had been working on leveraging military intelligence to improve civilian warning, protection, and evacuation — with ongoing efforts since 2015 continuously updated and adapted since 2022.<sup>111</sup> Notably, militarization of civil society has been shown to erode social and institutional trust in a protracted conflict<sup>112</sup> — some of the core factors enabling resistance activities, as discussed in Section 2.

In terms of quality and resilience of governance structures, Ukraine entered the conflict in a state of open anocracy, i.e., weak institutional capacity,<sup>113</sup> making the state more prone to violent (rather than nonviolent) responses to a crisis before reforms starting in 2018.<sup>114</sup> Ukraine's urban regions have demonstrated higher adaptability, as well as

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<sup>105</sup> (Aug 4, 2022). Ukraine: Ukrainian fighting tactics endanger civilians. Amnesty International.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/08/ukraine-ukrainian-fighting-tactics-endanger-civilians/>.

<sup>106</sup> Geopolitical Intelligence Services AG (Oct 4, 2023). Eyewitness to war: Assessing the Ukrainian capacity to fight.

<https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/ukraine-fighting-will/>.

<sup>107</sup> (Aug 4, 2022). Ukraine: Ukrainian fighting tactics endanger civilians. Amnesty International.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/08/ukraine-ukrainian-fighting-tactics-endanger-civilians/>.

<sup>108</sup> See, e.g., Novosolova, N. and Machlouzarides, M. (Jan 17, 2024). Sharp Wave 2 Big Picture Report. UNDP.

<https://www.undp.org/ukraine/publications/sharp-assessing-social-cohesion-resistance-and-peoples-needs-ukraine-amid-russian-full-scale-invasion-wave-2-2023>.

<sup>109</sup> See, e.g., Jankowitz, M. (March 8, 2022). A grandma in Kyiv says she took out a suspicious drone while Russia was attacking by throwing a jar of pickled tomatoes at it. Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/kyiv-grandma-took-down-ussian-drone-with-jar-tomato-pickles-2022-3>.

<sup>110</sup> Daza Sierra, F. (2023). Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War. International Catalan Institute for Peace.

<https://www.icip.cat/en/publication/ukrainian-nonviolent-civil-resistance-in-the-face-of-war/>; Kepe, M., and Demus, A. (Aug 15, 2023). Resisting Russia. RAND. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA2034-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2034-1.html).

<sup>111</sup> (2023). The Role of Civil-Military Cooperation in the Protection of Civilians: the Ukraine Experience. Center for Civilians in Conflict. <https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/The-Role-of-Civil-Military-Cooperation-in-Protection-of-Civilians-The-Ukraine-Experience.pdf>.

<sup>112</sup> Bateson, R. (2017). The Socialization of Civilians and Militia Members: Evidence from Guatemala. *Journal of Peace Research*, 54(5): 634-647; Krohley, N. (Feb 28, 2024). Ukrainian Civilians Are Pioneering the Art of Resistance. *Foreign Policy*.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/02/28/ukrainian-civilian-resistance-movements-women-war-mavkas/>.

<sup>113</sup> See Polity Scale rankings at <https://www.systemicpeace.org/csprandd.html>.

<sup>114</sup> Murauskaite, E. E., Quinn, D., Wilkenfeld, J., Astorino-Courtois, A., and DeFrancisci, C. S. (2023).

Regime, power, state capacity, and the use of violence in gray zone international crises. In Wilkenfeld,



civic engagement.<sup>115</sup> A decade-long effort to decentralize regional governance has left rural areas (particularly those closer to the front lines) more vulnerable to the shocks of the ongoing war — despite greater decision-making autonomy that was expected to enhance adaptability.<sup>116</sup> Indeed, only a quarter of Ukrainians claimed to be taking part in events organized by the local government, and 10 percent reported there no access to public consultation mechanisms in their region.<sup>117</sup> A growing number of regional-level organizations and civic initiatives have been providing socioeconomic and psychological support to the most vulnerable social groups<sup>118</sup> — with non-governmental institutions attempting to complement and compensate for the strain on governmental resources.

The effectiveness and transparency of government institutions, as well as strengthening the rule of law, has been seen by the Ukrainian public and NGOs as key factors affecting resilience in the face of war.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, according to a 2024 NGO survey, fighting corruption was seen as the most important factor (66% of votes), followed by veteran reintegration (65%) and strengthening the rule of law (56%) — in contrast, fighting disinformation and resolving community conflicts were assigned lesser priority (42% and 25%, respectively).<sup>120</sup> Somewhat similarly, in a RAND study, trust and (lack of) corruption were identified as the key durable factors enhancing social resilience, along with ethnic identity.<sup>121</sup> Unfortunately, entrenched corruption remains an institutional challenge that continues to haunt Ukraine across multiple fronts. In distributing the incoming military assistance, the challenges of inter-institutional and government-military coordination ranged from difficulties in upkeeping accurate information about different unit endowments to diversions of equipment, and divergence of needs and capabilities as communicated to donor states by military versus civilian authorities.<sup>122</sup>

The specific nonviolent resistance efforts by small groups and individuals are further detailed in Section 5.3, while the overall insight from this section is the mixed outcomes of the cost-benefit analysis on national-level integrated resistance efforts.

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J. and Murauskaite, E. E. (eds.). *Escalation Management in International Crises*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

<sup>115</sup> Rabinovych, M., Brik, T., Darkovich, A., Savisko, M., Hatsko, V., Tytiuk, S., and Piddubnyi, I. (Oct 6, 2023). Explaining Ukraine's resilience to Russia's invasion: The role of local governance. *Governance*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12827>.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Novosolova, N. and Machlouzarides, M. (Jan 17, 2024). *Sharp Wave 2 Big Picture Report*. UNDP. <https://www.undp.org/ukraine/publications/sharp-assessing-social-cohesion-resistance-and-peoples-needs-ukraine-amid-russian-full-scale-invasion-wave-2-2023>.

<sup>118</sup> Lutsevych, O. (June 2024). *Ukraine's wartime recovery and the role of civil society*. Chatham House. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/2024-06-05-ukraine-wartime-recovery-role-civil-society-lutsevych.pdf.pdf>.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Connable, B., Mc Nerney, M. J., Marcellino, W., Frank, A. B., Hargrove, H., Posard, M. N., Zimmerman, S. R., Lander, N., Castillo, J. J., and Sladden, J. (Sep 13, 2019). *Will to Fight: Returning to the Human Fundamentals of War*. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_briefs/RB10040.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB10040.html).

<sup>122</sup> Murauskaite, E. (ed.) (2024). *War in Ukraine: Understanding Western Tools Short of War*, De Gruyter; Geopolitical Intelligence Services AG (Oct 4, 2023). *Eyewitness to war: Assessing the Ukrainian capacity to fight*. <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/ukraine-fighting-will/>.

### 4.3 Leave-Behind Pre-trained Resistance

Since Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014, NATO and U.S. military and special forces had been working with Ukraine to strengthen the capacity of local law enforcement and armed forces, as well as to build up a network that could lead and coordinate resistance efforts in case of a broader invasion.<sup>123</sup> Indeed, Ukraine seemed to be the test bed for NATO's Resistance Operating Concept developed in 2020,<sup>124</sup> which encouraged member states to actively plan for integrated resistance efforts ahead of a potential occupation. The initial critique of the ROC was that the theoretical frameworks on which it was built have been based on examples of rural guerrilla activity (such as World War II French resistance or Cold War resistance to the Soviet regime), which turned out to be considerably less relevant to the urban warfare that unfolded in Ukraine in early 2022.<sup>125</sup> However, the greatest drawback was the relatively swift exposure of these pre-trained groups with the help of pro-Russian collaborators and Russia's capture of Ukrainian state records.<sup>126</sup> Instead, self-organizing decentralized civilian networks seemed to be more successful in nonviolent resistance efforts (as discussed in Section 5.3), while violent resistance efforts were boosted by various armed fighter groups, including foreign veteran trainers and fighters. The external efforts to train and equip Ukrainian special forces, regular armed forces, and law enforcement were extremely helpful in boosting Ukraine's defensibility, particularly in the early days of the invasion; however, their impact on the resistance efforts by civilian populace seems to have been of lesser significance.

## 5. Nonviolent Resistance

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### 5.1 Agency and Conformism

With a substantive body of research devoted to exploring and explaining the “right-hand side” of resistance and resilience scale presented in Figure 1 (i.e., from nonviolent resisters to guerrilla fighters), it is just as important to take a closer look at the complexities involved on the “left-hand side.” Notions of agency and victimhood are at the forefront of civilian decisions whether to leave or stay in war-torn territories, and if staying, which side to support (overtly or covertly). Research into civilian behavior in contested territories that range from Latin America and Southeast Asia to Ukraine indicates the importance of recognizing the substantial agency involved in these

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<sup>123</sup> See, e.g., Murauskaite, E. E. (March 15, 2023). U.S. Military Training Assistance to Ukraine: Impact Assessment. START, University of Maryland. <https://www.start.umd.edu/publication/us-military-training-assistance-ukraine>.

<sup>124</sup> Fiala, O., Smith, K., and Lofberg, A. (2020). Resistance Operating Concept (ROC). JSOU Press. <https://jsou.edu/Press/PublicationDashboard/25>.

<sup>125</sup> Stringer, K. D., and Hooiveld, J. J. H. (2023). Urban Resistance to Occupation: An Underestimated Element of Land Warfare. *Parameters*, 53(3). doi:10.55540/0031-1723.3244.

<sup>126</sup> Watling, J., Danyluk, O., and Reynolds, N. (March 2023). Preliminary Lessons from Russia's Unconventional Operations during the Russo-Ukrainian War, February 2022 — February 2023. Royal United Services Institute. <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/special-resources/preliminary-lessons-russias-unconventional-operations-during-russo-ukrainian-war-february-2022>; Krohley, N. (Feb 28, 2024). Ukrainian Civilians Are Pioneering the Art of Resistance. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/02/28/ukrainian-civilian-resistance-movements-women-war-mavkas/>.

somewhat overlooked “left-hand side” decisions, and their surprising impact on shaping the behavior of the armed state and nonstate actors vying for the territory.<sup>127</sup>

Indeed, the civilians constitute an important resource in the conflict (civil or conventional war alike), and their choice to emigrate has been treated as an extreme means of voicing grievances<sup>128</sup> — an aspect that is typically overlooked, focusing on the shame and betrayal narratives. The decision to stay is closely associated not only with social cohesion factors (discussed in Section 2.2), but also with the provision of security guarantees of one of the violent actors vying for the territory.<sup>129</sup> In 250 interviews with civilians in Bosnia, Gaza, Libya, and Somalia, assuring protection for self and family was identified as the main factor motivating them to stay and get involved.<sup>130</sup>

Nevertheless, it is important to carefully dissect the decision to stay in an occupied territory, allowing for ambiguity between active collaboration, passive conformism, and active non-conformism. For instance, in Syria, some of the civilians who had decided to stay following the ISIS territorial conquest claimed they were refusing to be enemies and continuing with their livelihoods as a form of values-based resistance, rather than acquiescence.<sup>131</sup> Similarly, in occupied Ukrainian territories, where protests were suppressed violently, some of the staying civilians reported having to publicly demonstrate compliance with the occupying Russian regime in order to survive, even though they retained personal identification with, and sympathies for, Ukraine.<sup>132</sup> In cases like these, outward conformism makes it particularly difficult to differentiate and verify the inward non-conformism — risking witch-hunts for collaboration and attempting to flatten complex legal, political, and ethical narratives. Indeed, tolerating civilian ambiguity is increasingly a prerequisite for ensuring them legal protection in line with international law<sup>133</sup>: i.e., treating the staying civilians not as synonymous with innocent, utterly uninvolved and thus deserving protection as (potential) victims, but, instead, recognizing their agency and potential conformist survival tactics, and choosing to shield them from violence as a means of limiting the costs of war — human, economic, and political. In addition, it is important to appreciate the limited self-reported awareness of civilians as to when their actions may cross the

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<sup>127</sup> Justino, P. (Apr 14, 2022). The war in Ukraine: Civilian vulnerability, resilience, and resistance. Centre for Economic Policy Research. <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/war-ukraine-civilian-vulnerability-resilience-and-resistance>; Barter, S. J. (2014). *Civilian Strategy in Civil War: Insights from Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines*. Palgrave Macmillan; Steele, A. (2009). *Seeking Safety: Avoiding Displacement and Choosing Destinations in Civil Wars*. *Journal of Peace Research*, 46(3), 419–429.

<sup>128</sup> Barter, S. J. (2014). *Civilian Strategy in Civil War: Insights from Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines*. Palgrave Macmillan; Roberts, A. (2011). *The Civilian in Modern War*. In Strachan, H., and Scheipers, S. (eds). *The Changing Character of War*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>129</sup> Hallward, M., Masullo, J., and Mouly, C. (2017). *Civil Resistance in Armed Conflict: Leveraging Nonviolent Action to Navigate War, Oppose Violence and Confront Oppression*. *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 12(3).

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2017.1376431>; Masullo, J. (2017). *A Theory of Civilian Non-co-operation with Armed Groups: Civilian Agency and Self-Protection in the Colombian Civil War*. Doctoral dissertation, European University Institute.

<sup>130</sup> Boehland, N. (2015). *The People's Perspectives: Civilian Involvement in Armed Conflict*. Center for Civilians in Conflict. [https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Peoples\\_Perspectives\\_WebFinal.pdf](https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Peoples_Perspectives_WebFinal.pdf).

<sup>131</sup> Hallward, M., Masullo, J., and Mouly, C. (2017). *Civil Resistance in Armed Conflict: Leveraging Nonviolent Action to Navigate War, Oppose Violence and Confront Oppression*. *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 12(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2017.1376431>.

<sup>132</sup> Krohley, N. (Feb 28, 2024). *Ukrainian Civilians Are Pioneering the Art of Resistance*. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/02/28/ukrainian-civilian-resistance-movements-women-war-mavkas/>.

<sup>133</sup> Slim, H. (2007). *Killing civilians: Method, Madness and Morality in War*. Hurst; Roberts, A. (2011). *The Civilian in Modern War*. In Strachan, H., and Scheipers, S. (eds). *The Changing Character of War*. Oxford University Press.

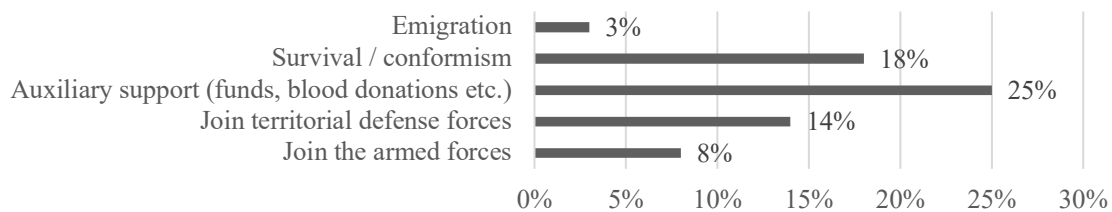
line forfeiting legal protection<sup>134</sup> — either as collaborators with an occupying regime (punishable by the resisting government) or as auxiliary supporters of resistance (treatable as enemy combatants by the occupiers). Finally, while this section starts by drawing attention to the under-appreciated agency of civilians, it is also essential to recognize the oftentimes limited freedom of choice, with forced recruitment or threats imposing, or at least significantly impacting, the choices about the extent of personal involvement in resistance activities.

## 5.2 Willingness and Forms of Resistance

Throughout this study, data from a number of international surveys concerning civilian willingness to take part in violent resistance have already been discussed. Section 2.3 showed such willingness to be low during peacetime, with an increase in light of (recent) conflict experience, while Section 3.3 presented nevertheless low self-reported propensity towards violent resistance in Ukrainian frontline and occupied territories. While the peace vs. war time difference has already been acknowledged, it is just as essential to compare intent with realities on the ground, in light of available data. Moreover, it is important to understand public proclivities along a more nuanced scale of possible involvement options, since historically, the portion of any given population taking part in violent resistance (or joining the armed forces) is relatively low.

In a nationally representative survey conducted in Ukraine on the eve of war (early February 2022), only a minor portion of civilians reported considering leaving the country, with a quarter of respondents willing to engage in nonviolent resistance and a similar portion willing to consider taking part in violent national defense efforts (see Figure 3). It is difficult to distinguish whether the respondents’ self-reportedly “willing to do anything to survive” meant bracing for victimhood or conformism, or whether the entirety of the pool willing to take any nonviolent action was captured in the “auxiliary support” response.

**Figure 3: Ukrainian Responses to the Prospects of War (Feb 2022)<sup>135</sup>**



As the war unfolded, between 2022 and 2024 around 6 million Ukrainians (or approximately 16% of the population) have been forced to emigrate, with another 4 million internally displaced<sup>136</sup> — considerably higher proportion than

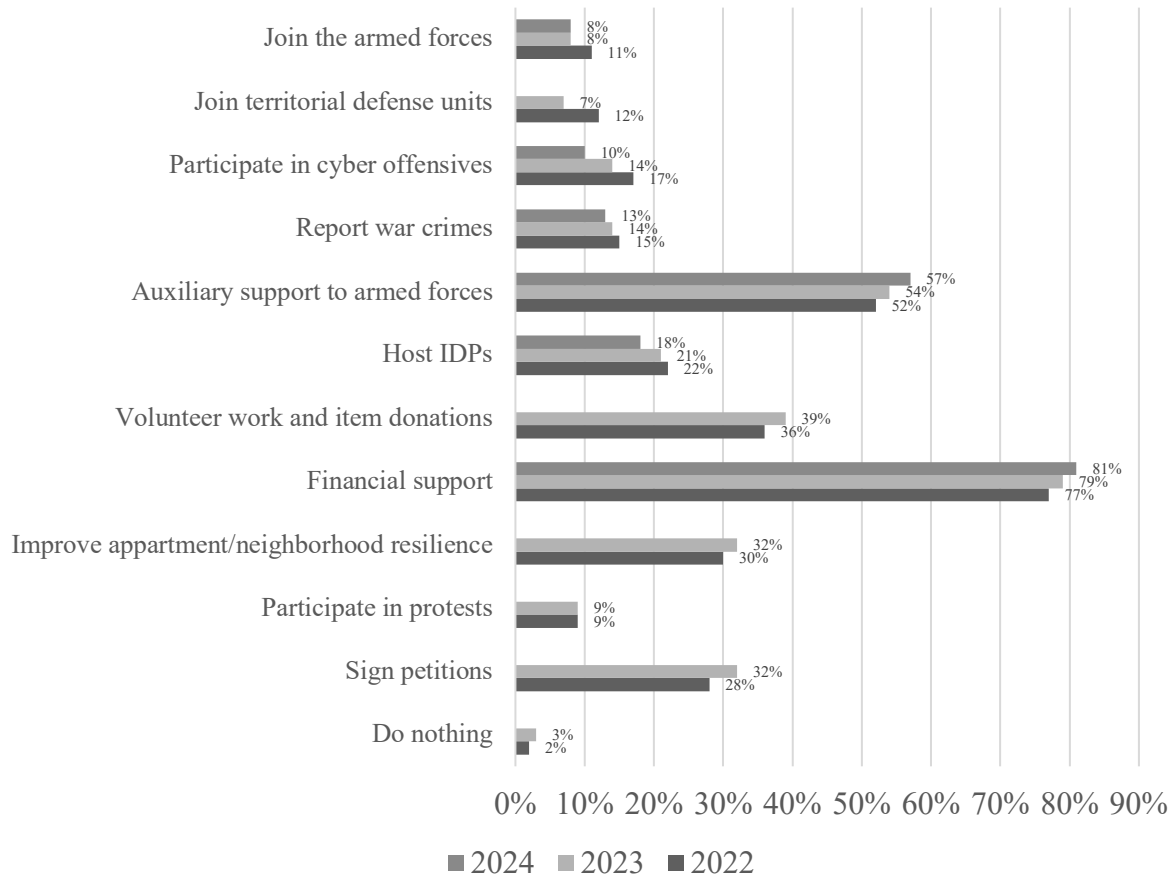
<sup>134</sup> Boehland, N. (2015). *The People's Perspectives: Civilian Involvement in Armed Conflict*. Center for Civilians in Conflict. [https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Peoples\\_Perspectives\\_WebFinal.pdf](https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Peoples_Perspectives_WebFinal.pdf).

<sup>135</sup> Adapted from: Reznik, O. (2023). The willingness of Ukrainians to fight for their own country on the eve of the 2022 Russian invasion. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 39(5), 329-346, DOI: 10.1080/1060586X.2023.2221592.

<sup>136</sup> (Jan 25, 2024). Ukrainian refugee crisis: the current situation. ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukrainian-refugee-crisis-current-situation-encs#:~:text=Up%20to%20a%20third%20of,in%20Europe%20but%20also%20overseas>.

could be expected from the self-reported intent ahead of the war. In addition, the data from two annual UN surveys of nearly 5,000 civilian respondents over the three years of the war (Figure 4) allows to complement and develop aspects of the broad-strokes picture with actions taken, as opposed to preferences expressed.

**Figure 4: Ukrainian Civilian Resistance Efforts 2022-2024<sup>137</sup>**



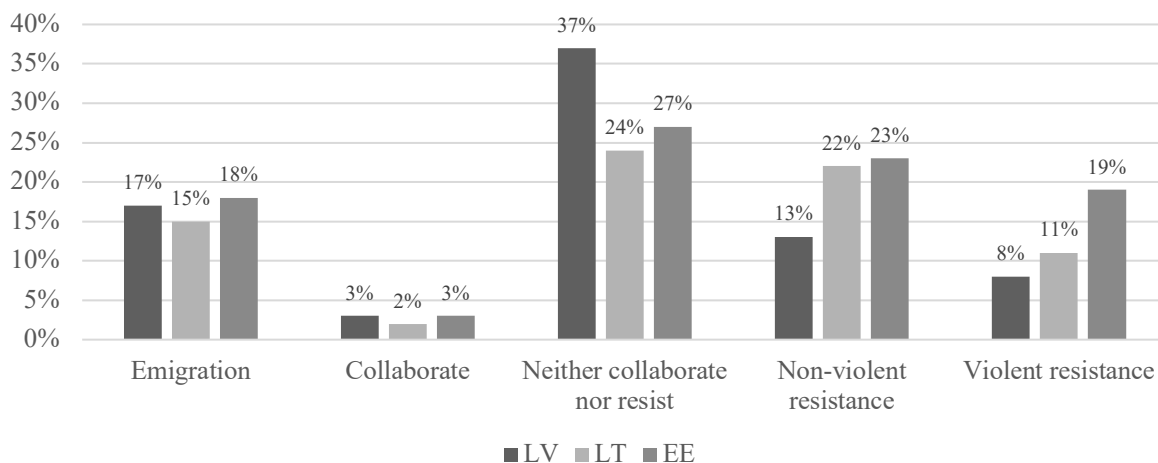
A far greater share of the Ukrainian populace seems to have engaged in various efforts of nonviolent resistance and fewer chose to take part in violent defense of the country. The surveyed categories were more difficult to map onto the nuanced scale presented in Figure 1, although they could broadly be classified into passive, active nonviolent, and active violent. However, in the passive category it would be difficult to distinguish victimhood from conformism, or to assess the extent of agency available to the respondents. Somewhat similarly, although the UN survey distinguishes assisting the Ukrainian armed forces from general volunteer activities, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the nature, extent and regularity of these activities. For instance, identifying as part of an intelligence network that helps document the violations by an occupying force is different from, for example, rape victims or their relatives calling a helpline. Similarly, it is hard to tell whether “improving neighborhood resilience” means material fortifications or investments (e.g., acquisition of electric generators) or if it refers to social cohesion

<sup>137</sup> Adapted from: Myronovych, S., Machlouzarides, M., Sereda, P., Dagli-Hustings, I. (July 2024). Sharp Wave 3 Big Picture Report. UNDP. [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-07/doc\\_pfrukr24\\_wave\\_3\\_report\\_v4.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-07/doc_pfrukr24_wave_3_report_v4.pdf).

type of activities. Nevertheless, this data conforms to the overall picture that the overwhelming majority of civilian population prefer to — and do — take part in nonviolent forms of resistance, with participation in violent resistance activities dwindling as the war unfolds. It is interesting to note that there seem to be perceptions of steep risks involved in protesting, with participant numbers similar to the percentage involved in the armed defense of the country. It is also curious to see large and even increasing percentages of respondents contributing financially, despite wartime deprivation (although the survey does not specify the donated amounts).

It is interesting to compare the Ukrainian self-reported pre-war data of intended courses of civilian action to a similar 2019 survey conducted in the three Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) — a NATO frontline region with historical experience of Russian aggression (Figure 5). While the polling was done before the outbreak of the conventional war in Ukraine, the prospective self-assessment on emigration looks much more sober, and in line with the real-world data from Ukraine once the war had started. Propensity for violent resistance was also comparable. Notably, it seems tremendously brave to indicate willingness to collaborate with an occupying regime outright, but the perceptions of there being a choice to continue with their pre-war lifestyle, neither collaborating nor resisting, seem highly optimistic.

**Figure 5: Civilian Willingness to Resist in the Baltic States (2019)<sup>138</sup>**



In a survey conducted in the same region in March–April 2022, the number of respondents willing to take part in violent resistance was on the rise: 12% in Latvia, 19% in Lithuania, and 21% in Estonia.<sup>139</sup> However, considerably larger portions of the population were willing to provide logistical (28–34%) and financial (13–23%) support<sup>140</sup> (emigration or collaboration were not included among potential response choices).

<sup>138</sup> Adapted from: Andzans, M. and Spruds, A. (2020). Willingness to defend one’s country and to resist in the Baltic states. *Security and Defense Quarterly*, 3(30), 15–28. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.35467/sdq/124712>.

<sup>139</sup> Clem, R. and Erik, E. (May 16, 2022). The Baltic States are Worried about Russia. *Good Authority*. <https://goodauthority.org/news/the-baltic-states-are-also-worried-about-russia/>.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.



Overall, pooling the publicly available data, this section sheds some light on how civilian inclinations to take part in the variety of activities discussed along the axis of resistance and resilience change in the face of an approaching armed conflict, and how their intent may translate into action. While sections 2 and 3 of this report deal with factors that motivate resistance activities, the next section is devoted to a more detailed mapping of the nonviolent resistance options available to civilians, and their potential effectiveness based on historical experience.

### 5.3 Nonviolence Forms and Empirics

Nonviolent civilian resistance includes a broad spectrum of activities ranging from barely noticeable acts of non-compliance with the demands of an occupying party (the lower boundary occasionally clouded with suspicions of collaboration) up to providing auxiliary support to fighters (the upper boundary constituting material support to combat under certain interpretations and thus blending with violence).

Chenoweth's seminal study has shown that nonviolent resistance movements have been on the rise since 2011, and over the past hundred years have consistently been more successful than violent ones — both against democratic and repressive non-democratic actors, and under various forms of power (im)balance between the opposing parties.<sup>141</sup> The relatively lower personal costs of entry, in terms of safety and effort requirements, have helped ensure greater resilience and survivability of decentralized networks and opened it up for a diverse set of participants — in turn, increasing the capacity for adaptiveness and innovation.<sup>142</sup> In addition, the ability for a greater portion of society to take part even in the smallest efforts contributes to the social cohesion, which not only helps enhance resilience during conflict, but also solidifies the social base for post-conflict recovery — and uniting a large(r) share of a population against an adversary imposes a set of additional costs upon the occupier. Legitimacy of nonviolent actions has been one of the key elements to their historical success (in line with the justness of cause factors, discussed in Section 2.2), with oppressive violent actors more willing to bargain with groups that have not harmed their peers, and, in turn, losing international and local support for violently targeting nonviolent actors.<sup>143</sup> Foreign supporters have also shown greater willingness to provide assistance to groups engaged in nonviolent resistance — and the U.S. historical track record of external support to nonviolent movements since 1940 has shown greater success, in contrast to attempts of regime change and support to other subversive foreign activities.<sup>144</sup>

The spectrum of nonviolent civilian activities is extremely broad and continues to expand with the availability of new technologies and societal adaptations to the emerging dynamics of modern conflicts. Based on recent, as well

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<sup>141</sup> Chenoweth, E. and Maria J. Stephan, M. J. (eds.). (2011). *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. Columbia University Press.

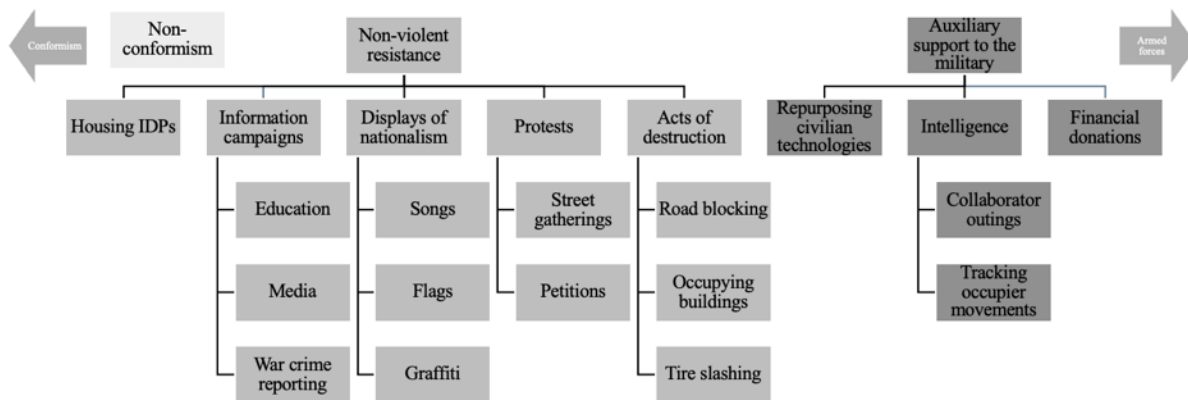
<sup>142</sup> Karatnycky, A. and Ackerman, P. (2005). *How Freedom Is Won: From Civil Resistance to Durable Democracy*. Freedom House; Chenoweth, E. and Maria J. Stephan, M. J. (eds.). (2011). *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. Columbia University Press. <https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/How%20Freedom%20is%20Won.pdf>.

<sup>143</sup> Chenoweth, E. and Maria J. Stephan, M. J. (eds.). (2011). *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. Columbia University Press.

<sup>144</sup> See, e.g., Irwin, W. (2019). *Support to Resistance: Strategic Purpose and Effectiveness*. In Stringer, K. D. and Napier, G. F. (eds.) (2018). *Resistance Views: Tartu Resistance Seminar Essays on Unconventional Warfare and Small State Resistance*. The JSOU Press, 19-2.

as historical, examples, and the diverse research classifications of such activities, Figure 6 offers a structured explanatory expansion to the range presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 6: Resistance Activity Categories**<sup>145</sup>



Historically, nonviolent resistance has been effectively classified by the extent of involvement into non-compliance, verbal expressions, and acts of resistance.<sup>146</sup> However, this study tries to additionally map resistance activities according to their proximity to the cardinal end of the violence spectrum: for instance, the typical examples of sabotage or providing intelligence falls much closer to, and are often instrumental to, activities conducted by the official armed forces or other militant groups, compared to the often-ignored or undervalued activities of underground information campaigns — an increasingly meaningful distinction in the face of evolving international legal approaches. Relevant historical examples include experiences as diverse as Dutch sabotage operations during World War II, Polish information campaigns in resistance to Soviet occupation, and the mass protests of the Arab

<sup>145</sup> Based on: Shultz, R. (2018). Nonviolent Civil Resistance Movements: Theory and Practice. In Stringer, K. D. and Napier, G. F. (eds.) Resistance Views: Tartu Resistance Seminar Essays on Unconventional Warfare and Small State Resistance. The JSOU Press, 95-114; Daza Sierra, F. (2023). Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War. International Catalan Institute for Peace. <https://www.icip.cat/en/publication/ukrainian-nonviolent-civil-resistance-in-the-face-of-war/>; Stringer, K. D., and Hooiveld, J. J. H. (2023). Urban Resistance to Occupation: An Underestimated Element of Land Warfare. *Parameters*, 53(3). doi:10.55540/0031-1723.3244.

Krohley, N. (Feb 28, 2024). Ukrainian Civilians Are Pioneering the Art of Resistance. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/02/28/ukrainian-civilian-resistance-movements-women-war-mavkas/>.

Beer, M. A. (March 2021). Civil Resistance Tactics in the 21st Century. International Center for Nonviolent Conflict. <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/resource/civil-resistance-tactics-in-the-21st-century/>; Chenoweth, E. and Maria J. Stephan, M. J. (eds.). (2011). *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. Columbia University Press.

<sup>146</sup> See, e.g., Beer, M. A. (March 2021). Civil Resistance Tactics in the 21st Century. International Center for Nonviolent Conflict. <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/resource/civil-resistance-tactics-in-the-21st-century/>.

Daza Sierra, F. (2023). Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War. International Catalan Institute for Peace. <https://www.icip.cat/en/publication/ukrainian-nonviolent-civil-resistance-in-the-face-of-war/>

Chenoweth, E. and Maria J. Stephan, M. J. (eds.). (2011). *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. Columbia University Press.

Spring.<sup>147</sup> The nonviolent resistance activities in the Russian-occupied Ukraine have been tracked with particular detail in a study by Daza Sierra, documenting 235 such acts during its first four months.<sup>148</sup> Surprisingly, non-conformism (arguably the least risky form of nonviolent resistance) was the least popular form, accounting for only 15% of all activities, with protests taking up the majority (63%).<sup>149</sup> The amplifying effects of online media (directed at both, domestic and international audiences) have been extensively discussed by Krohley<sup>150</sup> — an emerging separate aspect of nonviolent resistance likely to play an ever increasing role in crises, as long as access to communications is maintained.

## 6. Conclusion

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This mapping study serves to review and broaden the pool of interdisciplinary academic research from which to draw insights on the factors motivating civilians to resist during an armed conflict and increase their resilience. The ability to see the notions such as ideological motivation or nationalist inclinations from multiple vantage points allows for a more precise calibration of the lenses assessing the type and extent of their impact. Theoretical and empirical material presented also shows the oppositional effects of frequently discussed demographic factors, as well as the complex ambiguity of integrated resistance activities. Given the inclination to apply looser humanitarian and legal standards amidst a crisis — with survival at stake, much more seems to be justifiable — reflecting on the wartime behavioral patterns and outcomes discussed here in a pre-crisis environment carves out a space for a more nuanced public discussion. One significant take away from the very manner many of the surveys discussed throughout this paper are framed is the implicit suggestion that motivating (or forcing) civilians towards violent resistance would be desirable — a notion that merits more rigorous discussion rather than a status of a baked-in assumption. Ukrainian wartime experience, among others, suggests that most civilians do choose some form of nonviolent engagement (rather than conformism), with another significant portion emigrating, forcibly or willingly. Perhaps a constructive alternative would be broadening the public discourse on the scope of effective nonviolent engagement options — shifting the pre-crisis notions of what it is that one is to prepare for, and potentially moving the highly securitized discourse of threat and alertness towards strengthening social cohesion. Indeed, the balance has been delicately teetering between stepping up state-level preparedness (thus improving deterrence) versus public attention fatigue and immunization to the consistently rising threat level (thus losing resilience).

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<sup>147</sup> See, e.g., Stringer, K. D., and Hooiveld, J. J. H. (2023). Urban Resistance to Occupation: An Underestimated Element of Land Warfare. *Parameters*, 53(3). doi:10.55540/0031-1723.3244.

<sup>148</sup> Daza Sierra, F. (2023). Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War. International Catalan Institute for Peace. <https://www.icip.cat/en/publication/ukrainian-nonviolent-civil-resistance-in-the-face-of-war/>.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Krohley, N. (Feb 28, 2024). Ukrainian Civilians Are Pioneering the Art of Resistance. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/02/28/ukrainian-civilian-resistance-movements-women-war-mavkas/>.



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