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Taras Ivanec

Advisor to the Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, PhD student of the Global Political Science Group, General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, 5, Šilo Str., Vilnius (Lithuania)
taras.ivanec@edu.lka.lt, <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8567-3400>

THEORIES OF DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF ARMED FORCES AND THEIR APPLICATION DURING CONFLICT

This thorough examination investigates the development and obstacles of Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) within the framework of Ukraine's persistent conflict with Russia from 2014 to 2024. The conflict, initially characterized by the annexation of Crimea and expanding into a full-scale war, highlights the imperative of combining military effectiveness with democratic responsibility, particularly in the context of hybrid warfare. Fundamental theories – Huntington's civil-military interactions principles, Janowitz's professionalization, Schiff's concordance model, and Feaver's principal-agent theory – offer essential insights for ensuring oversight during combat. These frameworks underscore the significance of civilian authority, public trust, transparency, and mutual comprehension, however encounter challenges when authoritarian inclinations or hybrid threats obscure civil-military demarcations. Ukraine's experience illustrates that including societal engagement – via civic groups, media, diaspora activity, and technological platforms – substantially improves openness and accountability. The extensive participation of civil society, especially during periods of intensified conflict, demonstrates a transition to hybrid supervisory frameworks in which societal entities enhance formal institutions, hence bolstering democratic resilience during crises. External circumstances, particularly Russia's annexation of Crimea and hybrid strategies, serve as drivers for changes aimed at strengthening military integrity and democratic supervision. These pressures expedite legislative and societal reforms focused on enhancing military openness, restructuring command hierarchies, and fostering public discourse. The Ukrainian situation illustrates how external dangers can act as both stressors and accelerators for the reinforcement of democratic principles, compelling institutions to adjust to emerging hybrid difficulties. The integration of institutional reforms and societal engagement demonstrates a comprehensive approach to civil-military interactions. Technological capabilities enable individuals to engage actively in the oversight of military actions, elevating accountability requirements above conventional models. Civil society initiatives, diaspora efforts, and technological platforms collaboratively enhance social cohesion and resilience, essential in both conflict situations and the maintenance of democratic legitimacy. This dynamic process underscores the importance of adaptive governance structures that can respond to evolving military threats while maintaining democratic standards. Moreover, international cooperation and comparative experiences offer valuable lessons for Ukraine, facilitating the adoption of best practices in civil-military relations. Ultimately, the Ukrainian case emphasizes that sustainable DCAF relies on a delicate balance between security imperatives and the preservation of civil liberties, especially in volatile geopolitical environments.

Keywords: *Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF), Societal Engagement, Institutional Oversight, Non-Institutional Oversight, Internal and External factors*

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Introduction

The aggressive war that Russia began against Ukraine by occupying and later annexing Crimea without its consent on February 20, 2014, signifies a profound upheaval in the modern era of a rules-based international order (Simpson 2014). The preservation of the global order relies on the principles of legal adherence; yet, since 2014, the realities of conflict have called into question even the most basic international, bilateral, and national standards, necessitating a reevaluation of these foundational concepts. Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) is the most fundamental principle in terms of military control, especially in Western countries. In contrast, authoritarian rule is defined by autocratic control of the armed forces (ACAF), the centralization of authority under a singular leader or governing elite, with the military frequently acting as a tool of repression and domination (Finer 1976). In ACAF transparency is curtailed, accountability measures are feeble or absent, and citizen control is limited. Unfortunately, during wartime, civilization and regulations are sometimes disregarded. If the Latin phrase «*Silentia omnium, mortis confessio est*» (Lomachinska 2022) meaning «*Silence of all is the confession of death*» is accurate, how can one reconcile the most essential democratic values while achieving military success? This statement indicates that amidst enormous disorder, such as wartime, even the most astute persons may become speechless, highlighting the significant effect of the experience on both individuals and society. So, is accountability and transparency of the defence and security sector in times of war possible? If yes, what internal and external factors make it possible? The most widely recognized civil-military studies authors seem to agree in its essence DCAF, as a principle, seeks the accountability and transparency of the armed forces and defence system as a whole to the nation and to the nation's democratically elected representatives. Concept does not make exceptions in times of hybrid or conventional conflicts, but requires certain adaptations. This article delineates conflicts through the lens of hybrid and conventional warfare in Ukraine, asserting that hybrid combat commenced in 2014 and escalated into a full-scale invasion in 2022. However, this escalation did not negate the existence of hybrid conflict, which continues to exert a significant effect on the

Russo-Ukrainian confrontation at an elevated intensity. Research problem – In the context of modern warfare marked by hybrid threats and prolonged war, how can the principles and practices of DCAF be effectively modified or maintained, to guarantee both military efficacy and democratic accountability? The objective of the article is to analyze the impact of society engagement, particularly the contributions of civil organizations, on military DCAF during periods of conflict. Tasks: 1) To conduct an exhaustive literature analysis of DCAF ideas, emphasizing scholarly perspectives on DCAF within military contexts; 2) To analyse how internal factors – such as Ukraine's strategic commitment to democratic principles and societal demands – and external factors – such as Russia's annexation of Crimea and hybrid warfare – have collectively driven legislative reforms and institutional transformation in Ukraine's security sector since 2014; 3) To identify and recommend further exploration areas. Potential impacts and challenges of integrating civil-military oversight models – leveraging digital platforms and societal engagement. The article used the term «conflict» broadly and utilizes «hybrid warfare» or «war» more narrowly when referring to conventional warfare. This article presents a comprehensive overview of DCAF, encompassing not just legal and institutional perspectives but also the entire interplay among political, military, and societal dimensions.

1. Theorizing Democratic Control of Armed Forces in Complex Conflict Environments

1.1. Foundational theories of civil-military relation and democratic oversight

The most authoritative political and social science authors, from a variety of viewpoints, have provided significant insights into the dynamics of DCAF, especially within emerging democracies. S. Huntington's concepts, articulated in «*The Soldier and the State*» provide essential insights into civil-military relations and democratic oversight during periods of conflict, while not specifically addressing a contemporary situation such as Ukraine. Focus on systematic transition Huntington posited that well-defined limits and reciprocal respect between civilian and military authorities are essential for enabling civilian institutions to shape and uphold democratic values and national security (Huntington 1957). For Huntington a regulated and balanced

interaction among politicians is essential to ensure respect for national-level choices. Another fundamental concept established by Huntington is «*The notion of trust*» – a requisite level of trust that must exist to prevent military forces from dominating civilians, who should retain authority. M. Janowitz's principal thesis is on the military's professionalization and its incorporation into civilian society. In conflict, M. Janowitz emphasizes the imperative for a technologically and administratively adept force that can respond to asymmetrical threats (Janowitz 1960). The primary task is to uphold civilian trust and legitimacy by ensuring military actions are consistent with social ideals and that military personnel are cognizant of and responsive to civilian concerns. Whether it enhances civil-military relations remains uncertain. He establishes a framework for comprehending how a professional military, seamlessly integrated into society, can address the complexities of conflict while upholding democratic principles.

Schiff's concordance theory highlights a harmonious relationship among the military, political elites, and the public, provides significant insights for hybrid warfare contexts. Within this context, effective armed forces oversight necessitates a substantial consensus among these three entities regarding national security objectives and the military's appropriate role (Schiff 2009). In times of conflict, this concordance may be undermined by conflicting narratives, disinformation tactics, or societal divisions. Consequently, sustaining control measures requires proactive measures to cultivate mutual understanding, transparency, and responsibility among all stakeholders. Feaver's principal-agent theory underscores the intrinsic tension in civil-military relations, especially in times of conflict. His idea posits that for democracy to flourish, «The military must endorse and honor each faction inside the government» (Feaver 1996). This enables a swift and accurate response during conflict scenarios, unimpeded by governmental entities.

To sum up, the foundational theories of Huntington and Janowitz provide valuable insights into civil-military relations and democratic oversight, especially during conflicts; however, their frameworks frequently presuppose a separation between the military and society that is increasingly obscured by modern hybrid warfare and greater societal involvement in security matters. To comprehensively grasp the dynamics of DCAF in contemporary conflicts, especially in contexts such as Ukraine where civil society is actively

involved, it is essential to augment these theoretical frameworks with research that prioritizes societal engagement and its oversight in guaranteeing responsible and accountable armed forces. Building on these insights into civil-military relations, Schiff's concordance theory and Feaver's principal-agent framework emphasize the importance of prioritizing civilian engagement to attain effective DCAF.

1.2. Balancing DCAF theory with non democratic perceptions of force

Historically, social theories have been contrasted with reality-based theories, and civil-military relations and DCAF is no exception. In the 500 BCA, the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus is attributed with the viewpoint, that war is at the center of politics (Kahn 1979). This demonstrates that from ancient times, contractual concepts, laws, or even universally accepted norms are ineffective when force is the sole determinant. When sufficiently strong, force can overcome both theory and reason. Also Clausewitz did not specifically write on DCAF, but underscored the primacy of political objectives above military considerations (Clausewitz 1984), a tenet that continues to be crucial in dialogues regarding control of the military. While Huntington and other authors analyze oversight over armed forces and intricate equilibrium of civil-military realms, second category of scholars, offer perspectives on authoritarian governance, or ACAF. S. Finer concentrated on military interventions and the dynamics of military governance in autocratic regimes, emphasizing the significance of political autonomy. S. Finer analyzes military intervention across various political contexts, positing that specific societal conditions, such as a fragile political culture and legitimacy, alongside organizational traits of the military, including a robust corporate identity, heighten the probability of military intervention. He does not concentrate on conflict itself; nonetheless, his research underscores how internal vulnerabilities and power vacuums inside the civilian domain render political systems susceptible to military hegemony. A. Stepan examined the techniques employed by military administrations and their operational mechanisms (Stepan 1988). His theory examines the techniques utilized by armies to sustain power, including the co-optation of civilian elites, repression of dissent, and the formulation of ideological reasons for their governance. G. O'Donnell expanded on this corpus of work by examining bureaucratic-

authoritarianism and the legitimization and organization of military regimes (O'Donnell 1978). G. O'Donnell's examination of bureaucratic authoritarianism provides a framework for comprehending how military regimes validate their authority through assertions of technical proficiency, economic advancement, and the curtailment of political engagement. His bureaucratic authoritarianism model highlights the technical characteristics of military governance and the marginalization of civil society in decision-making processes, which directly contravenes the principles of DCAF. G. O'Donnell disapproves of some characteristics of DCAF in specific societies. Based on S. Huntington, M. Janowitz, R. Schiff, D. Feaver, S. Finer, A. Stepan and G. O'Donnell foundational theories, effective DCAF in times of conflicts differentiate from DCAF in peace time, it necessitates adaptation and synthesis, recognizing both the persistent principles and the emerging challenges of contemporary warfare.

1) DCAF in times of peace:

- Aims to guarantee military accountability and transparency to democratically elected civilian authority;
- Functions based on the principles of the rule of law, respect for human rights, and public engagement in defence and security policy;
- Highlights robust legislative control, defined civilian command structures, and autonomous judicial systems. Crucial element throughout the years to maintain respect in contemporary systems.

2) DCAF in times of conflict:

- Challenges conventional DCAF, as it may encounter difficulties operating successfully in hybrid or open warfare. The heightened dependence on military power may foster an atmosphere in which civilian oversight and openness are diminished, leading to constitutional and legal difficulties;
- Highlights importance to maintain the authority and integrity of the government and nation, rather than compromising it for civilian approval.

These theories underscore the significance of not only shared understanding, accountability, transparency, and civilian oversight, but also power which collectively enhance civil-military relations in times of conflict. Given that foundational DCAF theories

were written immediately after World War II or during the Cold War, rather than in the context of renewed threats of warfare, it is valuable to analyze these fundamental DCAF theories and principles during conflict in more detail through the lens of societal engagement, both institutionally and by involving significantly broader societal strata.

1.3. Contemporary institutional and non-institutional oversight approaches in Ukraine

The supervision of the Ukrainian military has progressively integrated contemporary technologies, journalistic inquiries, anti-corruption strategies, diaspora efforts, and voluntary initiatives since the commencement of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. These aspects collectively seek to enhance democratic governance and accountability within Ukraine's defence sector against the backdrop of conflict and the creation of national identity. Upon examining foundational and other DCAF theories, it is evident that control over armed forces is present in every state, while autocratic or transitional regimes may choose not to characterize their control methods as democratic. The primary difference between these models is accountability and transparency to their respective societies, with DCAF exceeding ACAF by integrating an extra mechanism: a voluntary, reciprocal connection through involvement and non-coerced activity. This part will further examine contemporary institutional and non-institutional approaches for implementing DCAF ideas in wartime contexts.

The incorporation of contemporary technologies has been crucial in improving openness and oversight within Ukraine's military (Bertrand, Marquardt 2023). Digital systems facilitate real-time oversight of military operations, logistics, and procurement processes, thereby diminishing prospects for corruption and inefficiencies. Technologies like satellite images and drones are utilized for tactical benefits and improved accountability, assuring adherence to appropriate governance standards. This transition to advanced technological solutions signifies a wider trend in democracies to utilize information technology for enhanced governance, consistent with the tenets of open government and societal engagement.

Table 1.

Compilation of contemporary technologies and platforms employed in Ukraine for institutional and non-institutional oversight

I. Technological oversight platforms developed by Ukrainian government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - United24 (u24.gov.ua): A government-supported fundraising website launched by President Zelenskyy to gather contributions for defence, medical assistance, and reconstruction efforts. - Diia (www.diia.gov.ua): A governmental platform designed to furnish citizens with online access to diverse state services, while minimizing bureaucracy and enhancing transparency. This facilitates social monitoring by enabling citizens to readily access governmental information and engage in e-governance. It facilitates access to diverse services. - Hochu Zhit (https://hochuzhit.com/): A Ukrainian state project that has the goal to get surrender from Russian Soldiers in Ukraine War.
II. Technological oversight platforms developed by the societal organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chesno (www.chesno.org): A prominent Ukrainian civic initiative dedicated to fostering transparency and accountability in the political sphere. Their website offers information regarding politicians, electoral campaigns, and government officials. It monitors Members of Parliament's attendance, fundraising, voting records, and campaign commitments. - Nashi Groshi (https://nashigroshi.org/): «Our Money» is a Ukrainian initiative aimed at enhancing government procurement and fostering greater transparency in political processes. - Texty (Texty.org.ua): is a Ukrainian organization dedicated to promoting political information and various data points using diverse methodologies. - Come Back Alive (savelife.in.ua): A leading Ukrainian charity that supplies equipment and training to the military. - YouControl (youcontrol.com.ua): A platform for evaluating compliance and security within Ukrainian enterprises. - Serhiy Prytula Charity Foundation (https://prytulafoundation.org/en): implement separate projects that carry strategic value for the Ukrainian Defence Forces and for restoring decent living conditions.
III. Initiatives for developed by diaspora:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Ukrainian World Congress (www.ukrainianworldcongress.org): Umbrella organization for diaspora, lobbying and fundraising. - United Help Ukraine (unitedhelpukraine.org): The objective of contributing funds for Ukraine in diaspora.

Investigative journalism has become an essential tool for ensuring accountability among military officials (Alperovitch 2022). Ukrainian media have revealed cases of corruption, incompetence, and inefficiency in the armed services, increasing public awareness and exerting political pressure for reform (Mironova, Whitt 2019). This journalistic scrutiny is augmented by anti-corruption initiatives implemented since 2014, designed to enhance supervision of defence finances and procurement procedures. The creation of independent anti-corruption institutions has established a framework for the transparent evaluation of military expenditures and operations, guaranteeing that civilian monitoring is meaningful rather than superficial.

Ukraine's recent history has also experienced a resurgence of civil society and voluntary initiatives that emphasize national unity and support for the military. Volunteer initiatives transcend mere material assistance;

they serve as mechanisms for civilian monitoring, as these organizations record and disclose irregularities in military conduct, so fostering accountability. Civilian engagement cultivates social agreement on the necessity of robust military governance, emphasizing transparency and accountability.

The Ukrainian diaspora has actively campaigned to bolster military oversight and national integrity during the current war. Expatriates have established numerous efforts encompassing fundraising for military equipment and lobbying foreign governments for financial and military support (Iarmolenko, Kerstetter 2015). The diaspora's involvement crosses boundaries, as persons of Ukrainian descent employ digital platforms to push for changes and promote narratives that strengthen national unity and resilience against aggression (Kozachenko 2021). This transnational action fosters the establishment of a strong supervision mechanism for Ukraine's military, generating worldwide pressure and support for democratic

norms concerning the necessity for robust military governance, emphasizing transparency and accountability. Recent technological, journalistic and literature acknowledges the constraints of only institutional approaches and emphasizes the crucial contribution of Ukrainian societal organizations in promoting DCAF since 2014. The increase in civil society involvement, catalyzed by occurrences such as the Euromaidan Revolution, the hybrid assaults in Donbas, and a full-scale war, significantly contributed to the army's operational effectiveness. Civil society organizations are engaged in national defence, as outlined in Security Governance Challenges. This mobilization of social actors aimed to rectify institutional deficiencies and enhance transparency and accountability within the security sector. Furthermore, the government receives support; yet, this assistance is contingent upon the needs and desires of the Ukrainian populace, serving as a countermeasure to ensure continued aid and cooperation, indicating the emergence of new stakeholders in this context. These dynamics illustrate that civil society involvement can serve as a potent and beneficial catalyst for democratic oversight.

To sum up, the convergence of contemporary technology, journalistic integrity, anti-corruption efforts, diaspora involvement, and voluntary activities forms a comprehensive strategy to enhance democratic supervision of the Ukrainian military. The interaction of these factors cultivates a culture of accountability and civic engagement, which is vital for Ukraine's continuous fight against external aggression and internal difficulties. The collaborative endeavors of society, both nationally and globally, highlight the resilience of the Ukrainian state and its dedication to a transparent and accountable military structure. Previous solely institutionally-driven models, particularly those highlighting objective civilian oversight and professional military forces, provide crucial insights into structure, yet may inadequately address the intricacies of modern complex conflict in Ukraine. Conversely, non-institution-based oversight theories emphasize the necessity of strong institutions and the active engagement of civil society to establish an improved framework for accountability and transparency. DCAF must assist civil society organizations, enhance media influence, and support their inquiries and volunteer programs to effectively promote and uphold democratic ideals.

2. Developments of Democratic Control of Armed Forces in Ukraine, 2014-2024

The historical setting of Ukraine's endeavor for democratic oversight of its armed forces from 2014 to 2024 has been complex, encompassing numerous internal and external influences. Notable occurrences during this time encompass the initiation of hostilities with Russia, persistent endeavors to assimilate Ukraine into the Euro-Atlantic community, and substantial transformations in political culture, all of which have impacted the dynamics of military government in the nation.

2.1. Internal factors

The internal political dynamics of Ukraine have been profoundly influenced by enduring differences that mirror its historical setting and cultural character. The «Euromaidan» protests that commenced in 2014 were predominantly fueled by extensive discontent with the pro-Russian administration of Viktor Yanukovich, culminating in his removal in February 2014. This movement signified a substantial advancement in European integration and democratic reforms, strongly contrasting with the post-Soviet legacy of corruption and oligarchy that afflicted Ukrainian politics (Aji, Setiyono 2023).

The war with Russia has heightened the drive for a cohesive national identity. The Russian invasion in February 2022 intensified popular attitude regarding a unique Ukrainian identity, characterized as a reaction to Russian aggression. Ukraine's political culture has undergone substantial evolution over the past decade, shaped by historical legacies and contemporary socio-political turmoil. The Euromaidan uprisings of 2013-2014 illustrated a movement for enhanced democratization and governance changes, resulting in increased demands for accountability and transparency in the military sector. During this period, public sentiment advocated for the eradication of corruption and the augmentation of state institutions' efficacy, especially the armed forces, which faced recurrent criticism for bureaucratic inefficiency and insufficient response to civil society (Kuzio 2024). In this context, DCAF became a crucial concern, prompting public participation in military supervision through several avenues, such as investigative journalism and diaspora advocacy for structural transformation of the defence management and control. These initiatives have been essential in emphasizing concerns regarding military governance and public accountability, acting as safeguards against

possible power abuses (Arel, Driscoll 2023). The interaction between civil society and military organizations illustrates wider issues of governance in the post-Soviet region, as remnants of authoritarianism persistently impede democratic consolidation.

Since 2014, Ukraine has initiated extensive legislative reforms to align its security sector governance with Western ideals of democratic oversight and civil-military ties, demonstrating its strategic alignment with Europe and NATO:

- The Law of Ukraine «On National Security of Ukraine» represented a pivotal development in this transformation, as it establishes a strategic framework that prioritizes DCAF, thus aligning national policies with European and NATO standards. This law measure bolstered the institutional framework for democratic oversight, enhancing the responsibility of security institutions and facilitating Ukraine's incorporation into Western security structures.

- Subsequent developments encompass the Law of Ukraine «On the Military Service and Military Duty», which refined conscription protocols by promoting professional military personnel and highlighting civilian supervision of military staffing and policies. This legislation sought to transition Ukraine's military to a more professional and transparent framework aligned with NATO norms, highlighting the autonomy of military personnel while preserving civilian oversight.

- The Law of Ukraine «On the Legal Status of Military Officials» enhanced democratic oversight by elucidating the legal framework regulating military leadership. It emphasized the concepts of accountability, openness, and respect for human rights, consistent with Western standards that prioritize civilian supervision and civilian-led accountability systems as foundational elements of democratic civil-military relations.

- The Law on Defence Procurement signifies a crucial institutional reform by establishing transparent and competitive processes for military acquisitions, thereby significantly diminishing corruption opportunities and enhancing accountability in defence expenditures – an essential advancement toward integrating European governance standards within Ukraine's defence sector. These reforms are essential for creating a contemporary, corruption-resistant defence industry that is answerable to civilian authorities.

In addition, Ukraine's legal structure for civil oversight was rejuvenated by anti-

corruption laws and institutions instituted post-2014, such as the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine established in 2015 and the Anti-Corruption Strategy, initially adopted in 2014 and renewed annually. These steps were essential for promoting openness, addressing corruption, and guaranteeing civilian control of security and defence institutions – fundamental components of the Western democratic governance paradigm. The establishment of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs illustrates attempts to enhance civilian governance of military-related matters beyond conventional defence frameworks, thereby bolstering democratic oversight in social policy and public trust. These legislative actions demonstrate Ukraine's intentional and planned efforts to establish democratic oversight of its security sector. They emphasize the nation's persistent dedication to reforming the institutional framework of civil-military relations, promoting openness, accountability, and civilian supremacy – principles essential to Western democratic paradigms. These reforms are essential in light of persistent external threats, since they seek to create resilient and accountable institutions that can uphold democratic principles in both wartime and peacetime.

The economic environment of Ukraine has significantly impacted the DCAF. The extended battle has resulted in considerable economic consequences, including heightened poverty levels, a decreasing population, and increasing unemployment rates. Economic distress frequently results in political instability, which can exacerbate challenges in maintaining democratic practices under military government. Diplomatic relations have transformed into a strategic cooperation focused on enhancing Ukraine's defence capabilities while addressing the necessity for improved democratic accountability systems (Bobrytska, Bobrytskyi, Bobrytskyi, Protska 2022). Furthermore, dependency on foreign military assistance and investment has prompted inquiries on sovereignty and control within the armed forces, especially concerning the ramifications of external financial reliance on national security strategies. As Ukraine pursues deeper relations with NATO and the European Union, the integration of foreign best practices into local military governance frameworks has become essential. Nonetheless, reconciling these dynamics has been difficult due to the increasing influence of external entities alongside domestic reform efforts.

These internal factors illustrate Ukraine's intentional endeavor to integrate concepts of

transparency, accountability, and civilian authority into its governance frameworks, essential for preserving democracy in the face of persistent external threats. Concurrently, Ukraine's economic landscape - negatively impacted by war - has encountered difficulties like increasing poverty, population decline, and unemployment, hindering the preservation of democratic processes under duress. The reliance on international military aid and foreign investment has prompted concerns regarding sovereignty and control over the armed forces, underscoring the necessity of harmonizing external support with domestic reforms to safeguard the resilience and integrity of Ukraine's democratic governance in both wartime and peacetime.

2.2. External factors

The annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014 represented a pivotal moment in Ukraine's national security landscape, necessitating a reassessment of military governance and democratic oversight structures. The event and the ensuing battle in the eastern territories of Donetsk and Luhansk sparked a hybrid war marked by a blend of conventional and irregular tactics utilized by pro-Russian troops, requiring a formidable military response from Ukraine. The aggression directed at Ukraine prompted extensive reforms, fostering a transition towards a more robust military stance and underscoring the imperative for democratic control within the armed services to address the external threat of Russian expansionism (Poshedin 2023). In response to the foreign danger, Ukraine has endeavoured to bolster its military capabilities via structural changes and an emphasis on improving civilian oversight of the military. Post-Maidan reforms encompassed personnel modifications intended to modernize the command structures of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The emphasis on democratic civilian oversight of the military has been highlighted by the implementation of parliamentary oversight procedures intended to guarantee that military operations conform to national and democratic ideals (Zaborowski 2016). Consequently, Russian influence has concurrently accelerated societal militarization and incited essential conversation regarding civil-military interactions as a fundamental aspect of democratic administration.

Ukraine's objective of Euro-Atlantic integration has profoundly influenced its military reforms and the quest for democratic oversight of the armed services. Establishing a Western-aligned security framework has

required conformity with NATO norms, highlighting the significance of civilian control in military decision-making. Numerous reforms have been implemented throughout the years, encompassing alterations in senior military leadership, the reorganization of the Ministry of Defence, and the creation of new accountability mechanisms for military spending and activities.

These institutional initiatives signify a wider social call for reform, as demonstrated by research focused on improving state-military ties and guaranteeing compliance with democratic governance principles. The creation of tools for legislative monitoring of military operations signifies a crucial advancement towards a more accountable military functioning under civilian supervision. The success of these initiatives depends on the entrenched political culture and the capacity to sustain public involvement in overseeing military matters.

Social engagement initiatives during this period have enhanced institutional reforms by promoting a culture of responsibility and public involvement in military governance. Journalistic inquiries have revealed numerous difficulties within the military sector and underscored the necessity for transparency in military operations and financial allocations. Civil society, especially the involvement of the Ukrainian diaspora, has been essential in promoting reforms and emphasizing the need for robust democratic control of the armed forces. Civil society organizations have aggressively influenced the discourse on military government by employing various platforms, including as media coverage and public forums. These initiatives frequently align with parliamentary endeavors to enact laws designed to strengthen democratic oversight mechanisms, highlighting a cooperative strategy to tackle the issue from both societal and institutional viewpoints. This dual strategy not only improves military supervision efficacy but also fortifies democratic principles in Ukraine as society actively participates in governance discussions.

The period from 2014 to 2024 represents a crucial phase of development for Ukraine, influenced by internal dynamics and external influences. Crucial elements including the persistent confrontation with Russia, the endeavor for Euro-Atlantic integration, and the fortitude of civil society have significantly influenced the present state of Ukraine's defence and government. The interaction of these aspects underscores the intricacies of

contemporary statehood in a conflict-ridden context and stresses the necessity for ongoing reform and adaptation to tackle current and future security issues. In response to the external danger, Ukraine has implemented extensive changes to modernize its military capabilities and improve civilian control systems. Post-Maidan reforms have resulted in changes to personnel and command structures within the Armed Forces of Ukraine, demonstrating a dedication to advancing transparent and responsible military government:

- In 2014 Defence Minister Pavlo Lebedev absconded from the nation amidst allegations of having commanded the use of force against demonstrators. His resignation signified a pivotal event, reflecting the transformations in military governance resulting from extensive public protest.

- In September 2019, Oleksandr Danylyuk (Titarenko, Kriachko 2024), Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council, resigned owing to policy disputes with President Zelenskyy, particularly on the Donbas conflict. This departure underscored governance conflicts and the challenges of governing during societal protests.

- 2020 minister Zahorodniuk was dismissed from his position due to apprehensions regarding his administration of the Ministry of Defence, especially concerning military preparedness.

- 2021 Arsen Avakov resigned under duress, chiefly owing to critiques of his management of multiple issues, including allegations of police misconduct and corruption inside the ministry. His resignation indicated a potential alteration in internal security policies.

- 2022 Iryna Venediktova (Attorney General) was suspended and subsequently removed by President Zelenskyy owing to purported partnerships with Russia by officials within her administration. Although predominantly a judicial character, her function was essential in adjudicating military offenses, hence influencing civil-military relations.

- In 2022 Ivan Bakanov (Director of the Security Service of Ukraine) was dismissed due to apprehensions about his efficacy and allegiance within the growing battle. The firing indicates significant evaluations of leadership inside essential security institutions. The specific grounds for his departure were not widely published, however they highlighted the internal scrutiny experienced by leadership during the conflict.

- In 2023 Oleksii Reznikov (Minister of Defence) was dismissed due to corruption charges related to military procurement practices. This prominent termination highlighted persistent accountability concerns within the defence sector, particularly vital in wartime government.

The use of parliamentary control mechanisms has been essential in guaranteeing that military actions adhere to democratic values, thus reducing the potential for autocratic government during wartime (Trepanowski, Drazkowski, Burdun, Bojarski 2023). Moreover, possible NATO membership has profoundly impacted the delivery of military assistance, an essential component of Ukraine's reformative path amid the current conflict. This support has frequently sought to strengthen the democratic frameworks essential for maintaining military efficacy and popular endorsement (Kolås 2024), so illustrating the connection between Euro-Atlantic integration objectives and military reforms. The consequences of the Russian invasion have so expedited societal militarization and stimulated intense discussion on civil-military relations as vital to democratic governance. Recognizing that a robust defence necessitates civilian support, changes have sought to synchronize military goals with the democratic legitimacy and sovereignty ambitions of Ukrainian society (Bartusevičius, Leeuwen, Mazepus, Laustsen, Tollefsen 2023). As a result, military responses in Ukraine are characterized not only as defensive measures but also as components of wider democratic ambitions, indicating a significant transformation in the perception and execution of civilian oversight over military operations amid persistent threats to national integrity (Geng, Xie, 2019). Through the promotion of this alignment, Ukraine aims to develop a defence strategy that effectively addresses external aggression while strengthening its democratic institutions, ensuring that military power is wielded under civil authority and in accordance with national interests (Shopina, Kobets, Tarasov 2021).

Such examples demonstrate that institutional improvements and social engagement programs, although diverse, are closely interconnected and frequently mutually reinforcing. Institutional reforms, including alterations in military command structures and the establishment of oversight mechanisms, create the essential framework for the exercise of democratic governance in times of war. These changes seek to create explicit accountability mechanisms for military

operations and foster compliance with democratic values. Conversely, social engagement programs highlight the effectiveness of these reforms, advocating for enhanced transparency and public accountability in military governance. Meanwhile, institutional reforms are crucial for establishing a robust legal framework for democratic oversight of the armed forces, while social initiatives foster a wider societal consensus on the significance of military accountability and responsiveness to civilian governance. This interplay reveals a holistic strategy for augmenting democratic oversight of Ukraine's military forces, requiring collaboration between institutional entities and civil society.

3. Application of societal engagement in times of conflict

3.1. Societal democratic control as a counter-strategy to aggression

German scholar H. Delbrück's contrasted between "tactics" and "strategy" and frequently emphasized on the military thought evolution (Ryan 2023). He suggested that societal engagement strengthens military infrastructure and cultivates a communal attitude that improves collective resilience in times of conflict. Delbrück's conclusions indicate that societal engagement in defense efforts can profoundly affect military outcomes. This societal engagement unites diverse demographic sectors, forming a robust front better equipped to endure external attacks. The strength of a nation during wartime is intrinsically linked to the degree of civilian engagement and the solidarity demonstrated in support of military efforts.

Furthermore, technological advancements are essential in facilitating societal participation. Crowdfunding initiatives like «Come Back Alive», «Serhiy Prytula Charity Foundation» and others, indicated in Table 1 facilitate communal fundraising by residents for vital resources, like drones, vehicles, and medical supplies for the military. This significant transition from conventional wartime fundraising methods – such as purchasing war bonds or increasing taxes – signifies a contemporary period in which individuals can directly enhance their military's operational capacities (Bugg, McDaniel, Scullin, Braver 2011). Donations obtained via these platforms have facilitated the acquisition of essential equipment for frontline operations, illustrating that civilian participation may significantly bolster military objectives. Moreover,

technologies such as social media have broadened the avenues for citizen activism and instantaneous information dissemination, equipping individuals with resources to organize, advocate, and counter opposing narratives. The initiative of citizen journalism, wherein ordinary folks disseminate information about the conflict, further empowers communities to shape public perception and mobilize global support. Institutions utilizing these platforms not only record the consequences of conflict but also stimulate collective action that strengthens national solidarity and fortifies resilience against foreign threats.

Ultimately, the strategic application of big data and sophisticated analytics allows governments and civil organizations to get deeper insights into public opinion and behaviour, thereby successfully targeting propaganda and involving communities in resilience-building efforts. This application of data promotes a sophisticated comprehension of societal dynamics in conflict scenarios, resulting in customized solutions that enhance collective engagement and strengthen civil-military ties. The engagement tactics utilized during the Ukraine war demonstrate that contemporary technical advancements and public participation provide novel frameworks for resilience in wartime, transcending institutional military paradigms (Sprinks, Woods, Parkinson, Wehn, Joyce, Ceccaroni, Gharesifard 2021). Cyber operations, hypersonic missiles, and other long-range armaments indicate that all citizens may be possible targets of an adversarial entity. Although this has been true since 2014, the variety of available weaponry and the expenses associated with its delivery – both financially and in terms of military personnel casualties – have fundamentally altered the nature of societal involvement. In Huntington's framework, the primary burden of weariness was borne by the military forces, while the civil population experienced it as a secondary consequence. The targeting of both civilian and military components of an adversarial civilization occurs simultaneously, utilizing a diverse range of physical and non-physical, kinetic, cyber, informational, and economic strategies. Moreover, citizens employing cyber operations, crowdfunding, and commercially accessible information might directly target the adversary's civilians.

3.2. Applicability of societal oriented DCAF theory in Ukraine

The elements of a nation's combat capability are referred to as the «*Center of Gravity*». The word was originally utilized by Clausewitz. In theological terms, the center of gravity encompasses the concentration of endeavor rather than a physical point, including both moral and material factors. The Ukrainian strategy for societal engagement has integrated the moral and material resources necessary to combat and achieve victory in Ukraine. They have executed this on the battlefield and implemented it in the global information environment. A crucial basis for Ukraine's society engagement in combat is the possession of a distinct political framework that enables the development, testing, implementation, and evolution of its strategy. Ukraine seems to have successfully integrated the civil and military dimensions of its governance in a way akin to Western democracies. Despite the inherent bureaucratic, historical, emotional, and institutional conflicts, the structure has enabled President Zelenskyy to administer his nation more effectively and engage with leaders to solicit their support. The Ukrainian military is supported by a president, a defence minister, and a military commander in chief, each with clearly defined tasks, enabling effective collaboration to develop cohesive national and military strategies. This represents a significant asymmetry between Ukraine and Russia in this conflict. Russia, characterized by its authoritarian and centralized decision-making, lacks an effective integration of civil and military authorities. Consequently, it is deprived of vigorous debate and the evaluation of diverse problem-solving options, resulting in unrealistic assumptions and political ambitions that conflict with its military capabilities. This is an issue that Russia, due to its territory takeover, has yet to address in this conflict. Since 2014, Ukraine has seen numerous transformations, with the development of internal institutions, particularly a robust civil-military connection, being among the most significant.

The concept of civil primacy is among the most ancient topics in political science. Plato examines the challenges associated with establishing a guardian class, men who, akin to noble dogs, would act as the ideal protectors of the city. The delineation of civil and military duties, along with the subordination of the military to democratically elected citizens, constitutes a crucial element in strategy formulation and the development of successful combat capabilities. As an inherently continuous dialogue, it subjects military concepts and strategies to broader examination

and the pragmatism of political and economic authorities. However, it also reveals to political leaders the complexities of constructing, maintaining, and utilizing military power in all its manifestations. A robust civil-military partnership facilitates the consideration of diverse tactics and plans, fostering successful competition among ideas. This interaction between policy and military strategy seeks to achieve improved alignment of the two. Political aims in warfare are feasible only if they align with corresponding military capabilities. The Ukrainian approach of citizen involvement has aimed to better align political and military outcomes of the war.

This article, based by S. Huntington and new institutionalism theories and contemporary strategic thought, posits that societal engagement represents a distinctive and increasingly relevant approach to battle and Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), particularly in contexts like Ukraine. Unlike traditional annihilation or exhaustion strategies that concentrate power within state institutions, social engagement leverages the resources and participation of a broad societal base. Modern technologies—social media, intelligent devices, crowd funding, improved connectivity, media, and journalism—enable rapid citizen interaction, hence reducing the civil-military divide. Civilians are directly financing military supplies, reporting adversary movements, and participating in cyber operations, obscuring the traditional distinction between offence and defence. The Ukrainians have adopted a hybrid strategy designed to weaken Russian determination while inflicting substantial economic and social costs. Thus, the strategic framework requires a transparent world. The approach of societal engagement has demonstrated efficacy for Ukraine and has promoted the advancement of DCAF throughout the nation. The concept of civic participation may enhance and broaden the perception of NATO. It leads to an increased level of public power and promotes improved support for citizens.

Conclusions:

1) Societal engagement is a crucial catalyst for the successful execution of DCAF, particularly in periods of conflict. The analysis reveals that within the context of Ukraine's hybrid and conventional warfare, civil society endeavors, including journalism, volunteer initiatives, diaspora activism, and digital platforms, have substantially enhanced transparency, accountability, and the

comprehensive reform of military governance. These factors frequently mitigate institutional deficiencies and promote a culture of accountable civil-military relations, underscoring that non-institutional monitoring mechanisms are essential instruments in modern conflict contexts.

2) Since 2014, legislative reforms have been essential in aligning Ukraine's institutional security sector governance with Western democratic ideals, strengthening the institutional framework for civilian oversight. Significant legislation, such as the 2018 «Law of Ukraine on the Principles of National Security» and the 2020 «Law on Defence Procurement», has established transparent, accountable, and rule-based frameworks aimed at augmenting public supervision, mitigating corruption, and advancing professional military standards. These structural transformations of institutions illustrate Ukraine's strategic dedication to integrating liberal democratic principles into its security framework, functioning both a reaction to foreign challenges and a declaration of sovereignty;

3) External forces, notably Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the ensuing hybrid warfare, have prompted legislative and societal reforms designed to enhance DCAF. The invasion expedited the implementation of accountability procedures, reformed military command structures, and intensified public discourse on civil-military ties. External pressures have highlighted the necessity for robust institutions that can address hybrid challenges while upholding democratic values, demonstrating that such risks serve as both catalysts and stressors for the strengthening of democracy

Recommendations for further exploration:

1) The amalgamation of contemporary technologies with civil society efforts has revolutionized conventional concepts of military oversight, broadening societal engagement into novel areas such as real-time supervision, crowdsourcing, cyber warfare, and social media reporting. Ukraine's employment of internet platforms such as *Diia*, *Chesno*, and foreign diaspora initiatives illustrates how modern tools augment transparency and enable citizens to directly impact military and security decisions. Future studies are needed to better understand how these technological supervision platforms undermine the conventional civil-military barrier, promoting a hybrid oversight model based on societal engagement and digital openness.

2) The evolving notion of societal engagement – marked by technology, media, civil society, and diaspora involvement – signifies a paradigm shift in modern civil-military relations, highlighting that DCAF during conflict relies not only on formal institutions but also on active societal participation. Ukraine's experience demonstrates that this hybrid supervision model can effectively cultivate resilient, transparent, and responsible military institutions, particularly under external pressure and during extended conflict, representing a notable advancement in the theory and practice of DCAF. This concept should be tested in future studies to evaluate how societal engagement concurrently functions as both a support element for the battleground and a governing collaborator.

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Тарас Ігорович Іванець,

Радник Міністерства національної оборони Литовської республіки,
аспірант всесвітньої групи політичних наук, Військова академія імені генерала Йонаса Жемайтиса Литви,
Вул. Шило, 5, м. Вільнюс (Литва)
taras.ivanec@edu.lka.lt, <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8567-3400>

ТЕОРІЇ ДЕМОКРАТИЧНОГО КОНТРОЛЮ ЗБРОЙНИХ СИЛ ТА ЇХ ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ ПІД ЧАС КОНФЛІКТУ

Це комплексне дослідження присвячене аналізу про розвиток і перешкоди демократичного контролю збройних сил (ДКЗС) у рамках затяжного конфлікту Росії проти України у 2014–2024 роках. Конфлікт, спершу позначений анексією Криму та зростаючий у повномасштабну війну, підкреслює необхідність поєднання військової ефективності з демократичною відповідальністю, особливо в умовах гібридної війни. Дослідження аналізує основні теорії контролю під час бойових дій – принципи цивільно-військових взаємин за Хантінгтоном, професіоналізація за Яновіцом, модель згоди за Шіффом і теорія принципала-агента за Фівером. Ці рамки наголошують на значущості цивільної влади, суспільної довіри, прозорості та взаєморозуміння, однак стикаються з викликами, коли авторитарні нахили або гібридні загрози стирають межі цивільного і військового секторів. Досвід України свідчить, що залучення громадськості — через громадські організації, медіа, діаспору й технологічні платформи — значно підвищує рівень відкритості та відповідальності. Широке залучення громадянського суспільства, особливо під час загострення конфлікту, показує перехід до гібридних наглядових структур, у яких суспільні інституції доповнюють формальні структури, зміцнюючи демократичну стійкість у кризових ситуаціях. Зовнішні обставини, зокрема анексія Криму Росією і гібридні тактики, слугують рушіями змін, спрямованих на посилення військової цілісності й демократичного контролю. Ці тиски прискорюють законодавчі і громадські реформи, спрямовані на підвищення відкритості військових структур, реформування командної ієрархії та стимулювання громадської дискусії. Аналіз ситуації в Україні дає підстави для висновку, що зовнішні загрози можуть виступати водночас і як чинники напруження, і як каталізатори посилення демократичних принципів, змушуючи інституції пристосовуватися до нових гібридних викликів. Інтеграція інституційних реформ і громадського залучення демонструє комплексний підхід до цивільно-військових взаємин. Звертається увага на важливість технологічних можливостей для більш активного залучення громадян у контроль за збройними силами, підвищуючи тим самим вимоги до відповідальності понад традиційні моделі. Підкреслюється роль ініціативи громадянського суспільства, діяльності діаспори та технологічних платформ у сприянні зміцненню соціальної єдності і стійкості, що є особливо важливо як під час конфліктів, так і для підтримки демократичної легітимності.

Ключові слова: *демократичний контроль збройних сил (ДКЗС), громадська участь, інституційний нагляд, неінституційний нагляд, внутрішні та зовнішні фактори*

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