

Gender, War, and Forced Displacement

Social Perceptions and Attitudes

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Russia's war against Ukraine affects all social processes, institutions, and practices. Gender roles and relations are no exception.¹ The impact of the war on the transformation of gender expectations, stereotypes, and roles may be long-lasting, multi-vector, and often contradictory, which poses a challenge for sociological studies. Since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, a lot of data and reflections have been published, based on both completed research projects and works in progress.

From these data, publications, and reflections, we know that in the context of the war, women play a key role in humanitarian responses but are not as involved in decision-making, especially at the formal level. Meanwhile, women's burden with reproductive work has increased significantly.² It was mainly women with children who fled the country, as most men are not allowed to go abroad during martial law.³ Women are at risk of war-related sexual violence and less reported domestic violence, especially in areas close to warzones.⁴ During the war, women, including

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- 1 I express my gratitude to the German Research Foundation (DFG), project number 45202164, which supported my position at the Technical University of Munich, making this essay possible.
 - 2 United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and CARE International, *Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine*, report, 04 May 2022, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Rapid-Gender-Analysis-of-Ukraine-en.pdf> [accessed: 20.03.2024].
 - 3 European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), *Forced displacement from and within Ukraine: Profiles, experiences, and aspirations of affected populations*, report, 28 October 2022, 8, https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2022-11/2022_11_09_Forced_Displacement_Ukraine_Joint_Report_EUAA_IOM_OECD_o.pdf [accessed: 20.03.2024].
 - 4 For war-related sexual violence, see: Marta Havryshko, "A Weapon of War? Some Reflections on Sexual Violence during the Russian War in Ukraine – Marta Havryshko in Conversation with Regina Mühlhäuser", *The New Fascism Syllabus*, 08 May 2022, <http://newfascismsyllabus.com/opinions/ukrainian-dispatches/a-weapon-of-war-some-observations-on-sexual-violence-during-the-russian-war-in-ukraine/> [accessed: 15.03.2023]. For domestic violence, see: Marta Zmysla, "Domashne nasytstvo kriz pryzmu viiny"

those displaced abroad, also face increased risks of sexual harassment and sexual and labour exploitation.⁵

The sociocultural dimensions of gender transformation in the context of war and forced displacement, however, are overall not well researched. Accordingly, in this essay, I focus on how the war challenges gender roles during forced displacement at the level of social perceptions and attitudes. In the first part of the essay, I review the available data on the war's general effects on gender roles at the level of both social attitudes and some practices. The second part considers the gender aspects of the attitudes of the Ukrainian population towards the forcibly displaced abroad. Finally, I discuss the practices of othering internally displaced persons (IDPs) across categories of gender and class. I focus on both IDPs and displaced persons abroad because both groups' experiences demonstrate various manifestations of sociocultural transformations in gender ideals, roles, and expectations in the context of the war and displacement. For this text, I use quantitative and qualitative data from research, including projects I have contributed to, which were conducted between 2022 and 2023, as well as materials from open sources (e.g., officials' statements in the media) and personal archives. I not only review these data but also provide examples of the construction of expectations about women's and men's roles in the context of war and forced displacement.

Gender Roles in the Context of War and Displacement: Is a Retraditionalisation Taking Place?

As many feminist researchers argue, in times of war, traditional representations of gender roles tend to be reinforced, and gender ideas are more likely to be based on the essentialist conceptions of men as 'protectors' and women as 'protected'.⁶

Even though the professional army in Ukraine is open to both men and women, since 24 February 2022, the law and state discourse has assigned the function of

("Domestic Violence through the Lens of War"), *Ukrainska Pravda (Ukrainian Truth)*, 29 November 2022, <https://life.pravda.com.ua/columns/2022/11/29/251536/> [accessed: 31.07.2024].

- 5 Sandra Pertek, Irina Kuznetsova, and Malgorzata Kot, "Not a single safe place": *The Ukrainian refugees at risk of violence, trafficking and exploitation, Findings from Poland and Ukraine*, University of Birmingham, report, 2022, <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/iris/2022/sereda-cee.pdf> [accessed: 31.07.2024].
- 6 Cynthia Cockburn, "Gender Relations as Causal in Militarization and War: A Feminist Standpoint", in: Kronsell, Annica, and Svedberg Erika (eds.), *Making Gender, Making War: Violence, Military and Peacekeeping Practices*, New York: Routledge, 2012, 19–34; Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives*, London: Pluto Press, 1983; and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, London: Sage, 1997.

protecting the state to men. Most men in Ukraine are prohibited from leaving the country during the war, and only civilian men can be mobilised and/or drafted. This shapes social expectations regarding men's primary role as 'defenders'. However, when considering the impact of war on ideas about masculinity, it is important to take into account the discrepancy between the law and official (state) discourse on the role of men as protectors as opposed to real, often hidden, ideas and practices. These implicit attitudes and practices are evidenced by data on the number of lawsuits for the evasion of mobilisation, the number of men who left or tried to leave the country illegally, and the striking growth of the share of men aged 30 to 45 among university and PhD students in 2022/2023 (under the current legislation, student status is ground for postponing mobilisation).⁷

It is also important to note that the visibility of women in the military⁸, in state, public, and media discourses is increasing,⁹ which challenges traditional gender order and affects gender perceptions. According to the data of a representative survey from September 2023, only 20 percent of surveyed Ukrainians associate the image of a veteran with men, while 80 percent answered that it could be both a man and a woman.¹⁰

The available data do not allow us to make unequivocal statements about the re-traditionalisation of gender roles; rather, they show the complex and ambiguous nature of these changes in Ukraine. In a representative survey focusing on a group of young people aged 15 to 25, conducted by Info Sapiens (IS), a Ukrainian research agency, at the end of 2022, 58 percent of respondents said that they did not think that there was any change, 28 percent believed that the influence of gender stereotypes during the war strengthened, and only 12 percent reported that it weakened. The study assumes that the respondents associate the increase in this influence with military conscription for men and restrictions on men leaving the country. However, the lessening of these stereotypes may be a consequence of the increased visibility

7 Olena Strelnyk, "Men are defenders, women are defended? How the war affects changes in the attitudes and perceptions of Ukrainian society about gender roles", *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, special issue, forthcoming 2024.

8 As of June 2023, there were 42,000 women in the military; their number had increased by 2.5 times compared to 2014. 5,000 women were fighting on the frontlines.

9 Olena Strelnyk, "From 'Berehynya' and 'Beauty' to women's agency: Media images of women in the context of Russia's war on Ukraine", in: Maryna Shevtsova (ed.), *Feminist Perspective on Russia's War in Ukraine: Hear Our Voices*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2024, 19–39.

10 Sotsiologichna hrupa "Reitynh" (Sociological Group "Rating"), "Dvadtsiat chetverte zahalnonatsionalne opytuvannia: Ukraina v umovakh viiny. Obraz veteraniv v ukrainskomu suspilstvi" ("The Twenty-Fourth National Survey 'Ukraine at War': The Image of Veterans in Ukrainian Society (5–7 September 2023)", 21 September 2023, https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/dvadcyat_chetverte_zagalnonac_onalne_opytuvanny_ukra_na_v_umovah_v_yni_obraz_veteran_v_v_ukra_nskomu.html [accessed: 31.07.2024].

of women in the army and the fact that women began to perform ‘male’ roles in displaced and separated families. The respondents of this qualitative study expect that a victory in the war will lead to an increase in gender equality in various spheres; however, they associate this not with the change of roles during the war itself but with further European integration of Ukrainian society.¹¹

Before the full-scale war, a high level of economic activity of women,¹² and a rather high level of political representation of women,¹³ were combined with mostly traditional distributions of gender roles in families, especially when it came to unpaid care work: mainly women were responsible for childcare and household chores, albeit with a gradual increase in men’s participation in this work.¹⁴ At the same time, there was a gradual erosion of gender stereotypes. For example, young people were more likely to support egalitarian views on women’s and men’s roles.¹⁵

It seems that the full-scale war did not stop these positive dynamics. For instance, a representative survey conducted in March 2023 showed that, compared to 2021, the share of Ukrainians who believe that “men are better leaders than women” decreased (from 43 to 24 percent), as did the share of those who believe that “a woman’s main vocation is to give birth to children” (from 64 to 59 percent).¹⁶

The war and forced displacement affect the practices of the distribution of roles in families and their discursive justification. Oksana Mikheeva’s research, conducted in 2019 in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, focused on territories both controlled and not controlled by the government of Ukraine. It revealed the prevalence of a patriarchal interpretation of male and female roles in the context of war. She showed that images of aid recipients and victims of war and forced displacement are associated with women, particularly the elderly. The informants

11 Inna Volosevych, Olha Prochukhanova, and Olena Strelnyk, *Henderni stereotypy ta roli ochyma molodi: do i pislia pochatku povnomasshtabnoi rosiiskoi ahresii (Gender Stereotypes and Roles through the Eyes of Youth: Before and After the Start of the Full-Scale Russian Aggression)*, Info Sapiens (IS), report, 2023, https://www.sapiens.com.ua/publications/socpol-research/257/GS_2.pdf [accessed: 31.07.2024].

12 In 2021, the employment rate of women aged 15 to 64 in Ukraine was 55.5 percent (as compared to 63.4 percent in the EU).

13 Women currently make up 21 percent of parliament members.

14 Sotsiologichna hrupa “Reitynh” (Sociological Group “Rating”), “Henderni roli i stereotypy” (“Gender Roles and Stereotypes”), 2021, https://ratingpro.org/research/gendernye_rol_i_stereotypy_v_ukraine.html [accessed: 31.07.2024].

15 Volosevych, Prochukhanova, and Strelnyk, *Henderni stereotypy ta roli ochyma molodi*, 51

16 Ukrainyskyi veteranskyi fond (Ukrainian Veterans Fund) and Sotsiologichna hrupa “Reitynh” (Sociological Group “Rating”), *Dyskryminatsiia riznykh sotsialnykh hrup u ZSU. Pohliady viiskovykh ta tsyvilnykh hromadian, berezen-kviten 2023 (The Discrimination of Different Social Groups in the Armed Forces of Ukraine: The Views of the Military and Civilians, March–April 2023)*, report, https://nako.org.ua/storage/pdf/2023-06-11--06:58:48-RG_NAKO_ComprehensiveResearch_08062023.pdf [accessed: 31.07.2023].

of her research, both men and women, constructed images of women as responsible for solving problems with documents and obtaining public services, even when the role of the man as the 'breadwinner' was no longer relevant (e.g., in elderly couples). In general, descriptions of and narratives around women focused on passive and sacrificial traits, while informants narrated men's roles in the contexts of duty, military authority, and their responsibilities towards their families and country. At the same time, there was an inversion of traditional gender roles, for example, in situations where men became unemployed and women took on the role of the 'earner'.¹⁷ Similar trends are present in the current situation. A full-scale war and the resulting humanitarian crisis have affected the distribution of gender roles in families and increased the burden on women in unpaid care work.¹⁸ Data obtained after 2022 suggests that receiving humanitarian aid for a family is mostly women's responsibility and, in fact, a new form of reproductive work.¹⁹

The biggest changes to gender roles take place in displaced and/or separated families (e.g., when a partner serves in the Armed Forces). In these cases, women perform tasks that, before the war, were usually the responsibility of a man. There are also particular challenges for women displaced abroad. Most fled without partners and with children, and they often do not have access to childcare services, are excluded from the usual support networks, suffer psychological issues caused by displacement and family separation, and are now solely responsible for their families.²⁰

17 Oksana Mikheeva, *Vyty z tini: Vplyv polityky (ne)vyznannia faktiv iz zhyttia liudei z nepidkontrolnykh Ukraini teritorii Lyhanskoi ta Donetskoi oblastei na cholovi ta zhinochi roli u podvsiakdenomu zhytti* (*Out of the Shadows: The Impact of the Policy of the (Non)recognition of Facts from the Lives of People from the Nongovernment-Controlled Areas of the Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts on Men's and Women's Roles in Everyday Life*), PAX, report, spring 2019, <https://ac.ucc.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/vyty-z-tini-doslidzhennya-Oksany-Miheevoyi-UKU.pdf> [accessed: 20.03.2024].

18 Anastasia Bobrova et al., *Pershi dni povnomasshtabnoi viiny v Ukraini: dumky, perezhyvannia, dii* (*The First Days of a Full-Scale War in Ukraine: Thoughts, Feelings, Actions*), Centre for Society Research "Cedos", report of initial findings, 2002, <https://cedos.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/pershi-dni-povnomasshtabnoyi-viiny-v-ukrayini.pdf>, [accessed: 31.07.2024]; and UN Women and CARE International, *Rapid Gender Analysis*.

19 Info Sapiens (IS) and Save the Children (SC), *Gender equality and conflict sensitivity analysis*, report, 2023, 18, unpublished. The study focuses on the impact of the full-scale war and forced displacement on women, men, girls, and boys based on a sample from three Oblasts of Ukraine (Zaporizhzhia, Vinnytsia, and Lviv) and three regions of Romania (Bucharest, Suceava, Iasi). Using individual interviews and focus group discussions, the researchers interviewed 133 participants (95 adults and 38 children). The participants were 92 females and 41 males (22 girls and 16 boys among these) from the local population, IDPs, and forcibly displaced people. The field data were collected in October–November 2022. The report is quoted with the organisation's permission.

20 Ibid.

At the same time, the impact of the war on the division of gender roles and care work in families requires further research. A representative survey from 2023 found that, compared to 2020, the participation of fathers (according to subjective assessments of interviewed men and women) in caring for children of all ages has increased, including in providing daily care and care during illness, buying goods, bringing them to and picking them up from kindergarten and school, and helping with studying, walking, and communicating, among other things. Additionally, the share of men who would like to take paternity leave has increased significantly (from 20 to 50 percent). However, it is difficult to determine whether and how the war influenced these changes.²¹

The Attitude of the Ukrainian Population Towards Forcibly Displaced Persons Abroad: Gender Aspects

Typically, most asylum applicants arriving in the European Union used to be young males. This is not the case for people fleeing Ukraine after the Russian invasion. Rather, these are mostly women and children because most adult men between 18 and 60 are prohibited from leaving Ukraine due to martial law.²² Some data is available on the gender aspects of the attitudes of the Ukrainian population towards forcibly displaced people. In September 2022, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology conducted a split-sample survey based on a telephone questionnaire of 2,000 residents of Ukraine (excluding territories not controlled by the Ukrainian government). According to the results of the survey, 90 percent of the respondents have a neutral or positive attitude towards refugees,²³ and only 5 percent condemn them.²⁴ In addition to the question of the general attitude towards Ukrainian refugees in Europe, detailed scenarios for refugees were provided, as listed below:

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- 21 Inna Volosevych and Olha Maksymenko, *Rol cholovikiv u batkivstvi u chas povnomashtabnoi viiny* (The Role of Men in Parenting during the Full-Scale War), Info Sapiens (IS) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), report, 2023, https://ukraine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ukr_rol_cholovikiv_u_batkivstvi_u_chas_povnomashtabnoi_viyiny.pdf [accessed: 31.07.2024].
- 22 EUAA, *Forced displacement from and within Ukraine*.
- 23 The survey used the term 'refugees'.
- 24 Anton Crushetsky, *Stavlennia ukraintsv, iaki zaraz perebuvaiut na terytorii Ukrainy, do ukrainskykh bizhentsiv u Evropi* (The Attitudes of Ukrainians Currently Residing in Ukraine Towards Ukrainian Refugees in Europe), Kyiv International Institute for Sociology (KIIS), report, 11 November 2022, <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1160&page=1> [accessed: 31.07.2024] [author's trans.].

A 38-year-old woman has an underage child. She moved to Europe, and her husband stayed in Ukraine. [...] A 25-year-old girl who is unmarried, has no children, and has moved to Europe. [...] A 72-year-old professor who was in Europe for personal reasons at the time of the invasion and has remained there. [...] A 31-year-old man who lives in Ukraine but occasionally works in Poland. He was in Poland at the time of the invasion and decided not to return for now but to continue working in Poland.²⁵

Each respondent was asked a general question about their attitudes towards refugees, and only one out of the four questions related to specific groups of refugees. An example question is:

As you know, many residents of Ukraine fled abroad and became refugees due to the Russian invasion. For example, this is the case of a 25-year-old girl who is unmarried, has no children, and has moved to Europe. Some residents of Ukraine who stayed behind are sympathetic to her and do not condemn her for leaving and not yet returning. Other people, on the contrary, are upset by this choice and condemn her for leaving and not returning. And what is your general attitude towards her?²⁶

According to the results of the survey, there is a differentiation in attitudes depending on the category of refugee. The most understanding attitude is towards women with young children whose husbands stayed in Ukraine. In this case, 90 percent of people chose “do not condemn” and only six percent chose “condemn”, which corresponds to the attitude towards refugees in general. This perception is somewhat worse if underage children are removed from the description. In cases of women without children, the results were 87 percent “do not condemn” and nine percent “condemn”. With men, the attitude also becomes more negative. Even if we are talking about an elderly man who was in Europe before the invasion, the results were 83 percent “do not condemn” and 10 percent “condemn”. The most negative attitude (among the considered categories) was towards a young man who was in Europe at the time of the invasion and stayed there. In this case, 75 percent do not condemn him, while 19 percent condemn him.²⁷ Although such variations are not striking, they nevertheless indicate differences in the perceptions of the roles of women and men in the context of war and displacement.

These attitudes apply especially to men displaced abroad. Since most men are prohibited from leaving the country during martial law, they may face the prejudice that they have crossed the border illegally. In Facebook groups centred on Ukrainians

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

living, for example, in Germany, a male refugee's request for advice or help is often received aggressively with reproaches and questions of how and why he ended up abroad.²⁸

In cases of displacement abroad, public opinion, as we can see, is most favourable to women, especially those with children. At the same time, women may face prejudices and stigma if their behaviour does not correspond to public ideas about 'real' victims of the war. For example, 'inappropriate behaviour' among refugee women is often connected to beauty practices. Manicures have turned into one such marker of behaviour that contradicts the image of a female victim of the war. "It hurt me to watch how for several weeks the discourse of 'terrible Ukrainian [women] refugees' who ask for asylum and then dare to get a manicure was spread", writes Kateryna Babkina for *Deutsche Welle*, suggesting that the authors of such messages may be Russian information 'technologists' specialising in influencing public sentiment.²⁹ Mariya Shcherbyna rightly points out that on the one hand, beauty practices are part of the image of a 'real woman', but on the other, they contradict the image of a 'real victim'. The search for beauty professionals by refugee women on social networks results in hate speech and new forms of control over a woman's body.³⁰

'Us' and 'Them': Gender and Class in the Othering of IDPs

Quantitative studies conducted from 2016 to 2022 reveal that the Ukrainian population had a generally positive attitude towards IDPs. However, negative attitudes and their regional bias were also noticeable. In particular, in 2016, 39 percent of Kyiv residents suggested that the arrival of IDPs caused increases in crime, while in other regions this indicator did not exceed 16 percent. Similarly, 21 percent of Kyiv residents considered that the arrival of IDPs led to increased social tensions in the community, which is twice as much as the percentage of that view in any other region. Lastly, residents of Kyiv often saw IDPs as competition for jobs, affordable housing, and free places in kindergartens. Meanwhile, the residents of Western Ukraine, especially outside the regional centres, also supported negative stereotypes about

28 This is based on the author's observation of at least three of the most popular Facebook groups for Ukrainians in Munich from June 2022 to September 2023.

29 Kateryna Babkina, "Manikiur yak zbroia masovoho urazhennia" ("A Manicure as a Weapon of Mass Destruction"), *Deutsche Welle*, 16 May 2022, <https://www.dw.com/uk/kateryna-babkina-manikiur-yak-zbroia-masovoho-urazhennia/a-61816902> [accessed: 31.07.2024] [author's trans.].

30 Mariya Shcherbyna, "Beauty practices and Ukrainian women refugees: another double bind", presentation at the conference *Women and their body*, 15 March 2023–17 March 2023, Center for the History of Women Philosophers and Scientists, Paderborn.

IDPs. They emphasised their pro-Russian political views, reluctance to work, aggressive attitude towards the locals, a posture of superiority, and desire to hold a special status due to their life circumstances.³¹

The start of the full-scale war caused an unprecedented wave of forced internal displacement. As of 23 May 2023, the International Organisation of Migration estimated that 5.1 million people were internally displaced in Ukraine. This represents a decrease compared to 5.9 million as of 5 December 2022.³² The share of males in the population of IDPs has steadily decreased during the first year of the full-scale war. For example, in March 2022, 46 percent of IDPs were male, as compared to 30 percent in August 2022³³. In May 2023, the share of males among IDPs was 42 percent.³⁴ Some studies claim that men avoid official registration as IDPs due to the intention to avoid mobilisation.³⁵

In a representative survey conducted by Info Sapiens (IS) in May 2022, 61 percent of respondents reported that they have a positive and sympathetic attitude towards IDPs, and only 5 percent reported a negative one. Almost one in three respondents (32 percent) reported that they help IDPs with food, and one in five (20 percent) said they assist financially or by volunteering.³⁶ However, a quantitative methodology cannot always provide a complete picture of attitudes towards IDPs, often due to the latent features of these attitudes. A 2022 study by IS and Right to Protect, which combined quantitative and qualitative methodologies, identified several conflict situations between local populations and IDPs caused by different reasons.³⁷

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- 31 Texty.org.Ua, "Opytuvannia dlia OON: ukraintsi pozytyvno stavliatsia do vymushenykh pereselentsiv" ("Survey for the UN: Ukrainians Have a Positive Attitude towards Displaced People"), 10 June 2016, https://texty.org.ua/fragments/68267/Opytuvanna_dlia_OON_ukrajinci_pozytyvno_stavlatsja_do-68267/ [accessed: 31.07.2024].
- 32 International Organization of Migration (IOM), *Ukraine Internal Displacement Report: General Population Survey*, report, round 13, June 2023, <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/ukraine-internal-displacement-report-general-population-survey-round-13-11-may-14-june-2023?> [accessed: 31.07.2024]; and International Organization of Migration (IOM), *Ukraine Internal Displacement Report: General Population Survey*, report, round 12, 23 January 2023, 1, <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/ukraine-internal-displacement-report-general-population-survey-round-12-16-23-january-2023> [accessed: 31.07.2024].
- 33 EUAA, *Forced displacement from and within Ukraine*, 34.
- 34 IOM, *Ukraine Internal Displacement Report: General Population Survey*, report, round 13, June 2023, 9.
- 35 CARE International, *Rapid Gender Analysis: Ukraine*, report, October 2023, 36, https://careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/RGA_Ukraine_2023_ENG.pdf [accessed: 31.07.2024].
- 36 Info Sapiens (IS), "61% ukraintsi stavliatsia do vymushenykh pereselentsiv pozytyvno ta spivchutlyvo, ale 5% – nehatyvno" ("61% of Ukrainians Have a Positive and Sympathetic Attitude towards Forcibly Displaced People, but 5% Have a Negative Attitude"), 06 June 2022, <https://sapiens.com.ua/ua/publication-single-page?id=232> [accessed: 31.07.2024].
- 37 Info Sapiens (IS) and Right to Protect, *Relationship Practices, Conflicts, and Trigger Themes among Ukrainian IDPs and Host Communities, as Well as Returnees and Home Communities*,

Otherring newly arrived people is something that may occur in any migration or displacement situation; however, this process has specific qualities in the context of the war and, in particular, when considering gender expectations towards men. One can assume that although not all men, or even most of them, are on the frontlines, gendered expectations that men should or have to fight are quite strong.³⁸ According to a study by the nongovernmental organisation (NGO) Centre for Society Research “Cedos”, which was conducted during the first months of the full-scale war, some IDPs said they experienced negative attitudes from locals. This was especially true for men because of the idea that men are ‘defenders’ and should fight, rather than stay in safe areas. According to some respondents, these prejudices even made it harder to access housing.³⁹

Data on the characteristics of such tensions and conflicts are available in other studies. According to the IS and Right to Protect study, 53 percent of IDPs and 59 percent of locals stated that they, with differing degrees of frequency, “have come across cases when men are accused of not fighting (hiding from the Military Commissariat)”.⁴⁰ In a study conducted by IS and Save the Children (SC) in October–November 2022, women, especially those whose loved ones were at the front, spoke emotionally about their expectations regarding men’s gender roles during the war. They constructed distinctions between ‘us’ (locals) and ‘them’ (IDPs) around the issue of men’s military service, viewing this as “our (‘real’) men fight” while “their (‘unreal’) men refuse to go to the front”.⁴¹

Negative images of displaced men are also present in official rhetoric. By default, it is assumed that local men are ready for military service, and the negative image of male IDPs is constructed around their reluctance to serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. For example, during a press conference, Pavlo Svadovskyi, the head of the centre responsible for the registration of men of draft age in the Volyn Oblast, said,

report, 2022, https://www.sapiens.com.ua/publications/socpol-research/255/R2P_Key%20research%20findings_peacebuilding_ENG-1.pdf [accessed: 31.07.2024].

38 No direct data are available on what proportion of men and women share these expectations. It is also worth considering the dynamic nature of the population’s attitude towards state mobilisation policies, which can influence attitudes towards male IDPs as well. I assume that public opinion is not consolidated on this issue, and with the passage of time, as issues became clear (the protracted nature of the war, systemic problems with the treatment and rehabilitation of the military, the sometimes forced nature of mobilisation, as well as the actual inability of military personnel to demobilise during the war), the share of men who are willing to serve in the Armed Forces has decreased significantly.

39 Bobrova et al., *Pershі dni povnomashtabnoi viiny v Ukraini*.

40 IS and Right to Protect, *Relationship Practices, Conflicts, and Trigger Themes*, 72.

41 IS and SC, *Gender equality and conflict sensitivity analysis*, 42–43.

“[t]hey [male IDPs] don’t want to fight. Of course, not all internally displaced persons [...] but most of them have no desire to register and defend the country”.⁴²

Otherring IDPs, and in particular men, sometimes takes the form of hate speech. In March 2022, the mayor of Chernivtsi, Roman Klichuk, wrote this post on his Facebook page:

WARNING

If you have witnessed inappropriate attacks on you or your acquaintances, have encountered rude behaviour from IDPs or other people, from today onwards, you should CALL AND REPORT THIS.

The police and a group of “educators” are ready to expedite the dispatch of those who like to “fight” to the front!⁴³

1,700 users shared this post. However, many critical comments said that the message provokes enmity between residents of different regions of Ukraine.

Otherring male IDPs is not only based on gender but also class. The negative image of a male IDP is often one of a ‘silver-spooner’ (*mazhory*)⁴⁴: he drives an expensive car and ‘sits in bars’. Some of the messages showing hate speech towards IDPs have markers of intentional misinformation, probably to create social discord. However, some of them seem genuine and appear in public spaces and in public statements of officials. For example, in the spring of 2022, a billboard was installed in the city of Truskavets reading: “‘Refugee’-silver-spooners [*Bizhentsi-mazhory*]. We hosted you hospitably. If you get drunk, we will beat you up and send you to the front”.⁴⁵

In March and April 2022, I also heard a few testimonies about so-called ‘guidelines for the decent behaviour of IDPs’ (this is mostly a typed text) placed in the public

42 Volynski novyny (Volyn News), “Na Volyni – skladna sytuatsiia z viiskovym oblikom pereselentsiv-cholovikiv” (“In Volyn, There is a Difficult Situation with the Military Registration of Displaced Men”), 25 October 2022, <https://www.volynnews.com/ua/news/all/bazhannia-zakhyshchaty-krayinu-nemaye-na-volyni-skladna-sytuatsiia-z-viiskovym-oblikom-pereselentsiv-cholovikiv/> [accessed: 31.07.2024].

43 Roman Klichuk, official Facebook page, “UVAHA ...”, Facebook post, 04 March 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/klichuk.roman/posts/363680165764257> [accessed: 31.07.2024] [author’s trans.]

44 The expression derives from ‘born with a silver spoon in their mouth’, referring to the person’s wealthy and privileged background.

45 Daria Kurenaia, “Vid movy vorozhnechi do ‘zustrichaemo svoikh’: iak zminiualosia stavlennia ukrainsiv do vymushenykh pereselentsiv” (“From the Language of Hostility to ‘Meeting Our People’: How the Attitude of Ukrainians towards Forced Displaced Changed”), 23 November 2022, <https://v-variant.com.ua/article/stavlennia-ukrainsiv-do-pereselentsiv/> [accessed: 31.07.2024] [author’s trans.]. In the section featuring “we will beat you up”, profanity is used.

spaces (e.g., hotels) of communities with high numbers of IDPs and addressed primarily to men.⁴⁶ They contained the following items, formulated in an aggressive tone with a threat of violence:

1. Did you sign up for territorial defence, did you register with the military?
2. You have two days for this.
3. Women, children, elderly people: we will certainly help them, and you fight; our men are on the frontlines.
4. The money you spend in our restaurants should go to the needs of the army and real refugees.
5. Women who do not have small children should volunteer.
6. These rules should become golden for you. If you don't follow the rules, the boys of the Territorial Defence, the police, and the Military Commissariat will explain them to you more intelligibly.⁴⁷

The image of a displaced woman, while gender-specific, can be constructed as class-based as well. For example, Borys Filatov, the mayor of Dnipro, wrote a Facebook post about IDPs in May 2022, after he visited Chernivtsi in Western Ukraine:

Girls with highlighted hair, with dogs under their arms, and in Juicy Couture plush costumes ... Boys [...] with laptops, who occupied all public catering establishments. Children screaming and running on the tables, with the complete indulgence of their parents. Total traffic violations by cars.⁴⁸

More than 8,000 users and several media sources shared the post.⁴⁹

46 I received two photographs as testimonies of such posters placed in a region with a high concentration of IDPs (in the city of Morshyn). According to one of the informants, who provided the photo in June 2022, she saw such posters frequently ("all over the city"). According to other evidence, these posters were no longer there in April 2022.

47 The original list contains eight items. Authors unknown, posters with so-called 'guidelines for the decent behaviour of IDPs', based on photographs of the posters received from anonymous sources, Morshyn, Ukraine, June 2022. [author's trans.].

48 Borys Filatov, personal Facebook page, Facebook post, 23 April 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/100002157183088/posts/5050845398330650> [accessed: 21.03.2023] [author's trans.]. As of 22 November 2023, the post is not available.

49 Dariia Demianyk, "‘‘la vse ponymaiu, no...': Fylatov v shoke ot povedeniya pereselentsev v Chernovtsakh ("I Understand Everything, but...': Filatov Shocked by the Behaviour of IDPs in Chernivtsi"), *Glavkom*, 25 April 2022, <https://glavcom.ua/ru/news/ya-vse-ponimayu-no-filatov-v-shoke-ot-povedeniya-pereselencev-v-chernovcah-840742.html> [accessed: 31.07.2024].

Conclusions

The war has affected gender expectations, stereotypes, and roles. In this essay, I focused primarily on the negative results of such processes. Using the example of the Ukrainian population's attitude towards forcibly displaced persons and the practices of othering IDPs, I showed how the war reinforces patriarchal ideas of gender roles. However, this is only a fragment of social reality. The impact of the war on social attitudes towards women's and men's roles is more complex and controversial. On the one hand, there is evidence of the reinforcement of traditional gender conceptions. This applies particularly to men, who, at least at the level of official state discourse, are expected to primarily perform the role of the 'defender' of the state. These expectations are expressed in the othering practices of male IDPs and those displaced abroad. On the other hand, data from sociological studies also indicate a positive trend in the decline of Ukrainian society's support for gender stereotypes and traditional gender-role expectations, which continues even during the war. One can also assume there is a trend of erasing patriarchal gender expectations of Ukrainian society about gender roles, not least due to forced displacement and family separation, as a result of which women acquire new roles and responsibilities. The nature and sustainability of these changes, however, require further research.

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