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INFLUENCE OF MILITARY ACTIONS IN THE EASTERN UKRAINE ON FORMATION OF VALUE ORIENTATIONS OF STUDENT YOUTH

Summary

The military conflict that deployed in the Eastern Ukraine in spring 2014 and its consequences are tragically affecting all spheres of public life. War disrupts the usual rhythm of life of the modern youth, leads to moral trauma and complicates realization of their aspirations and values. The purpose of the article was to assess military actions in the Eastern Ukraine by the student community and their impact on formation of value orientation of student youth. Data for publication were obtained on the basis of a questionnaire consisting of 19 questions by surveying 140 people. All respondents are students of Ternopil Ivan Puluj National Technical University.

Key words: value orientations, student youth, war, peace.

Introduction

The unpredictable and unexpected aggression of Russian Federation against Ukraine, military conflict and hostilities that have been lasting in the Eastern Ukraine for eight years long, have unfortunately become an integral part of the daily life of Ukrainians. The tense socio-political situation and continuation of the armed conflict have a negative impact on the student youth not only of the occupied territories, but also on all young citizens of our country. In addition to the most obvious consequences of the military conflict in the eastern regions of Ukraine, such as deaths and total destruction, the impact of war on formation of value orientation of student youth is relevant. Under conditions of popularization of violence it is extremely important to become a full-fledged citizen capable of defending one's rights, because the future of our country depends on it. War nullifies the moral and legal norms of peaceful life, compromise and dialogue as a means of achieving goals. This will largely determine the norms

of behaviour of Ukrainian citizens who were formed during the war. The desire for peace and war end is now the main desire of the majority of Ukrainian students.

Purpose, Subject and Research Methods

The purpose of study is to assess the attitude of Ukrainian student youth to hostilities in the Eastern Ukraine and the impact of war on formation of value orientations of students in the context of armed conflict. The study was conducted in May 2021 on the basis of Ternopil Ivan Puluj National Technical University (TNTU named after I. Puluj). The respondents were 140 University students – 104 boys and 36 girls aged 18 to 21, representing mainly the Western Region of Ukraine – Volyn, Zakarpattia, Ternopil, Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk Regions. 53% of respondents are urban dwellers and 47% are rural residents. The content of the questionnaire is based on a sociological survey of the Razumkov Center on citizens' assessment of the situation in Donbas¹, supplemented by own materials. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first part contained questions about age, gender, place of residence. The second part consisted of sixteen questions, the answer to which would provide an opportunity to assess the attitude of students to hostilities in the Eastern Ukraine, impact of war on formation of value orientations and position of the students on further conflict settlement. The results of study were summarized and presented in this article in the descriptive and graphical forms.

Research Results

The problem of formation of value orientation of young people is complex and diverse. It remains especially relevant in Ukraine today, as the young generation grows up and is brought up in the context of hostilities and hybrid war. With the beginning of Russia's military aggression in the East of our country, the values of such priorities of Ukrainian youth as an independence of Ukraine, democratic development of the country, freedom of speech, democratic control of government decisions, national and cultural revival, social equality and participation in political life have significantly increased². Instead, before the hybrid war, the number of young people who were constantly interested in political events in the country was

¹ Citizens' Assessment of the Situation in Donbass. The Results of a Sociological Study. Kyiv, 2015 / URL: https://razumkov.org.ua/upload/1441002945_file.pdf

² Value Orientations of Modern Ukrainian Youth. Annual Report to the President of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on the Situation of Youth in Ukraine (following the results of 2015) / State Institute of Family and Youth Policy. K., 2016. 200 p. / URL: https://dodmc.dn.ua/images/stories/Biblioteka/cinnicni_orient_sych_ykr_molodi.pdf

only 13.2%, while 33.4% were not interested in politics at all³. The years of war dramatically influenced the values formation system of youth, in particular, the importance of civic and national values, such as patriotism, freedom, tolerance, humanism⁴. Today it is extremely important that the issue of formation of value orientations of youth should be an integral part of state-building processes and inclusion of youth in these processes⁵. Participants of the parliamentary hearings on the situation of youth in Ukraine on “Value Orientations of Modern Ukrainian Youth” stressed that formation of value orientations of youth should be based on various forms of work with youth to educate independent, responsible personality for his/her own life and the life of the country. After all, young people are the social group that decisively influences the content and nature of the future of our country, accumulates promising trends of social development⁶.

The study and analysis of the impact of war on formation of value orientations of students is relevant, because the future state of society depends on what foundation of values will be laid in youth. The study aimed to find out the attitude of students of Ternopil Ivan Puluj National Technical University to war, their assessment of socio-political situation in the country and its impact on the value orientations of modern youth. The study involved 140 students, of which 74% of respondents were boys and 26% – girls.

The survey gives grounds to claim that the majority of young people at our University are conscious citizens who takes care about the fate of their country. Thus, 89% of respondents said they were concerned about the complexity of relations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, and 93% of respondents said they monitor the course of hostilities in the media, while 14% of them – constantly monitor the situation in the Eastern Ukraine. 91% of respondents consider Russia an aggressor state, a party to the conflict, and Donetsk and Lugansk “people’s republics” are considered to be terrorist organizations that have no right to represent the interests of the population of these territories (50%). Giving a general assessment of the military conflict, 89% of respondents consider Russia’s war to be aggression against Ukraine,

³ Drach S.V. Value Orientations of Student Youth of Ukrainian Society: Essence and Dynamics. [Collection of scientific works of Khmelnytsky Institute of Social Technologies of the University “Ukraine”](#). 2010. nr. 2. P. 26–30. / URL: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/Znpkhist_2010_2_9

⁴ Savchenko S.V. Changes in Social Norms and Value Orientations of Youth of Donbas under the Conditions of a Hybrid War. [Education and pedagogical Sciences](#). 2018. Nr. 1. P. 5–16. / URL: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/OsDon_2018_1_2

⁵ Otroshchenko N.L. Formation of Value Orientations of Student Youth of the East of Ukraine as Social and Pedagogical Investment in Successful Future of the Region / Hybrid War in the East of Ukraine in Interdisciplinary Dimension: Origins, Realities, Prospects of Reintegration: Collection of Scientific Works. Starobilsk, 2017. P. 238–243.

⁶ Parliamentary Hearings. / URL: https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/Novyny/Parlamentski_slukhannya/136683.html

each of which calls the Russian Federation an aggressor state. 33% of respondents consider Donetsk and Lugansk “people’s republics” to be quasi-state formations, with 83% of them admit that Russia is a party to the conflict.

The vast majority of respondents (57%) are convinced of the need to provide Ukraine with lethal weapons that will enable the Ukrainian military to stop Russian aggression. 23% of respondents, fearing further escalation of the armed conflict, believe that the provision of such weapons will complicate the peaceful resolution of the conflict, and 13% of respondents believe that provision of lethal weapons will not fundamentally change the situation. Further actions to resolve the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine are ambiguously assessed by students. 50% of respondents support the position on the continuation of hostilities and return of the occupied territories. 9 and 21% of respondents were in favour of separating these territories and giving them a special status, respectively, 20% of students are currently undecided on this issue.

Analyzing the issues of a deeper political nature, it can be argued that the opinions of the respondents were divided as follows. Thus, the question of further coexistence of Ukraine and the uncontrolled part of Donbas is probably too difficult for young people and therefore the relative majority of respondents (47%) found it difficult to answer. The rest of the respondents were in favour of giving Donbas a special status (23%) and ending any relations between Ukraine and the currently occupied territories (29%). Opinions of respondents on the consolidation of the special status of Donbas in the Constitution of Ukraine and on the results of Minsk agreements are presented at Fig. 1. and Fig. 2.

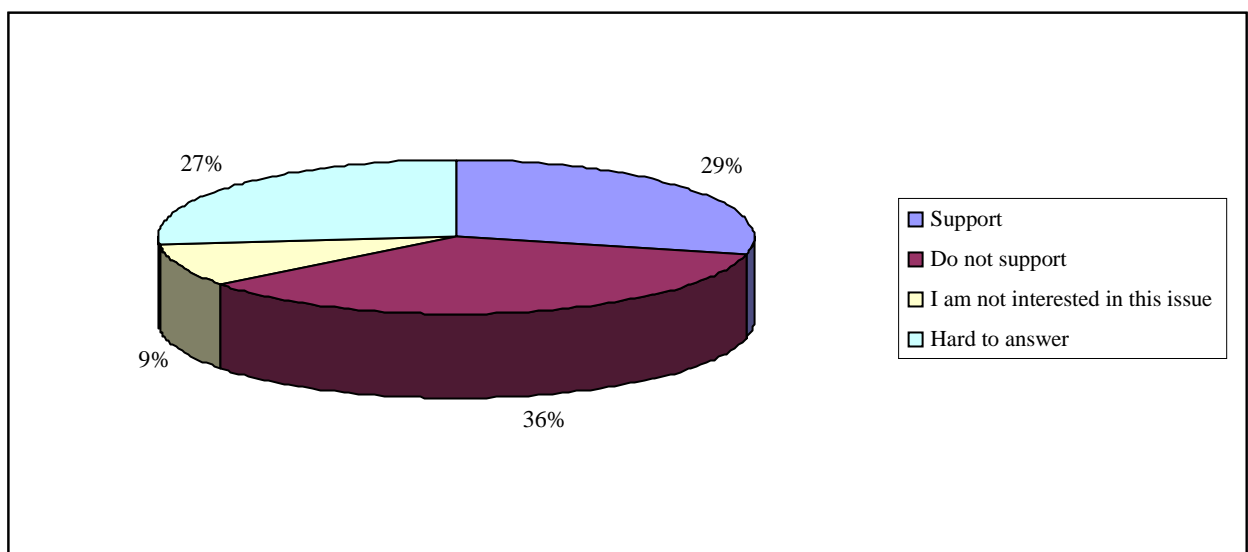


Figure 1. Position on enshrining the special status of Donbas in the Constitution of Ukraine (%)

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of the conducted research

(Ternopil Ivan Puluj National Technical University)

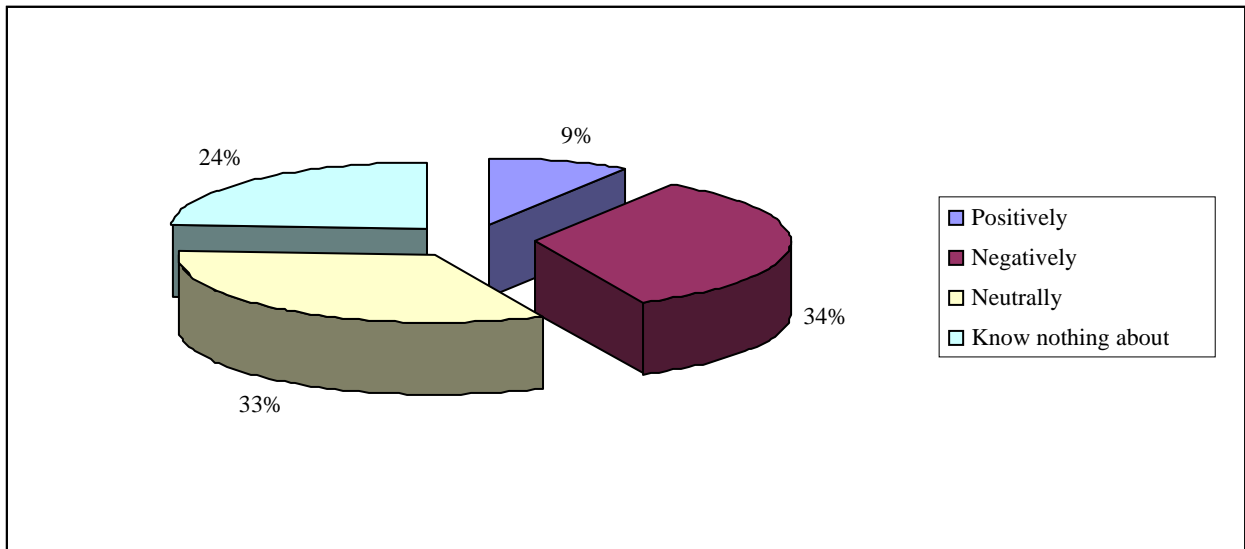


Figure 2. Evaluation of the results of Minsk agreements on the situation in Donbas (%)

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of the conducted research

(Ternopil Ivan Puluj National Technical University)

When asked about the participation in the hostilities of relatives, friends and acquaintances, 46% of respondents answered positively, and those who were not affected by the hostilities – make up the vast majority (54%). Analyzing the degree of readiness of the students to join the ranks of the Ukrainian army (Table 1) in case of mobilization announcement, 43% of respondents did not think about this issue.

Table 1. Readiness to join the ranks of the Ukrainian army in case of total mobilization

Issue	Sex				Total	
	boys	%	girls	%	respondents	%
Yes, I am ready to join the Armed Forces of Ukraine in case of mobilization to protect the borders of Ukraine	22	21	2	6	24	17
Yes, sometimes there was an idea to join the Armed Forces in order to protect the borders of Ukraine	6	6	12	33	18	13
Did not think on this issue	48	46	12	33	60	43
No, not ready	28	27	10	28	38	27
Total	104	100	36	100	140	100

Source: Own elaboration

(Ternopil Ivan Puluj National Technical University)

However, 17% of respondents today say they are ready to defend the state border. At the same time, 33% of girls are inclined to think about military service and 24% of young men surveyed are ready to defend the Motherland. Position of students community on the assessment of the defence capabilities of the Ukrainian army is interesting (Fig. 3). 60% of respondents

believe that the Ukrainian army and its defence capabilities need radical reforms to reach the European level. 26% of respondents are convinced that formation of a strong army, capable to defend, began in Ukraine with the beginning of war and only 14% of respondents believe that Ukraine has formed a capable army, which is the key to freedom and independence of Ukraine.

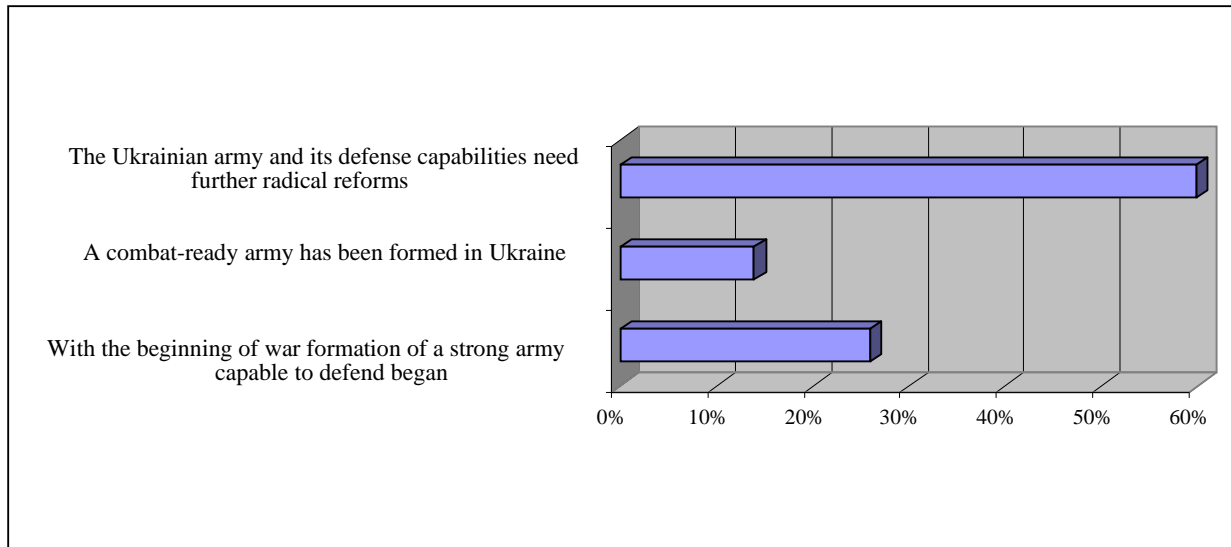


Figure 3. Assessment of defence capability of the Ukrainian army (%)

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of the conducted research

(Ternopil Ivan Puluj National Technical University)

Volunteering plays an important role in lives of today's students. The study shows (Fig. 4) that 61% of respondents personally or their relatives participated in providing material assistance to the Ukrainian military, organized assistance to refugees (29%) and were personally involved in volunteer movements in support of the Ukrainian army (10%). At the same time, 13% of respondents take an active civil position – they are involved in volunteer movements in support of the Ukrainian military, are engaged in organizing assistance to both migrants and population of the occupied territories.

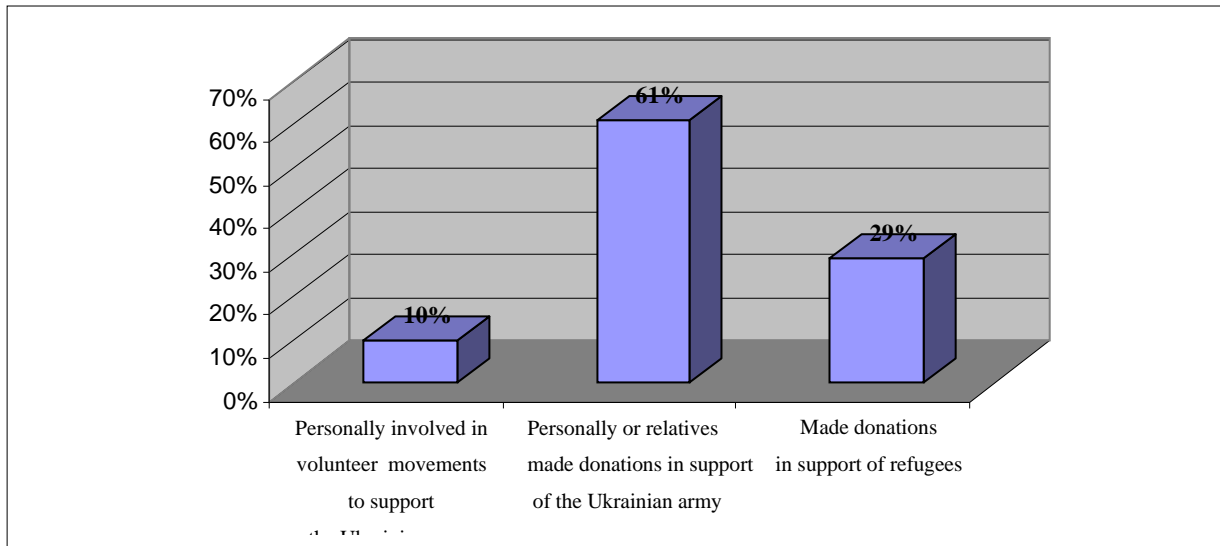


Figure 4. Participation in volunteer work (%)

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of the conducted research

(Ternopil Ivan Puluj National Technical University)

When asked about the victory in the war and return of the territories occupied by Russia, the vast majority of respondents (81%) are confident in a positive solution to this issue in favor of our country (Fig. 5).

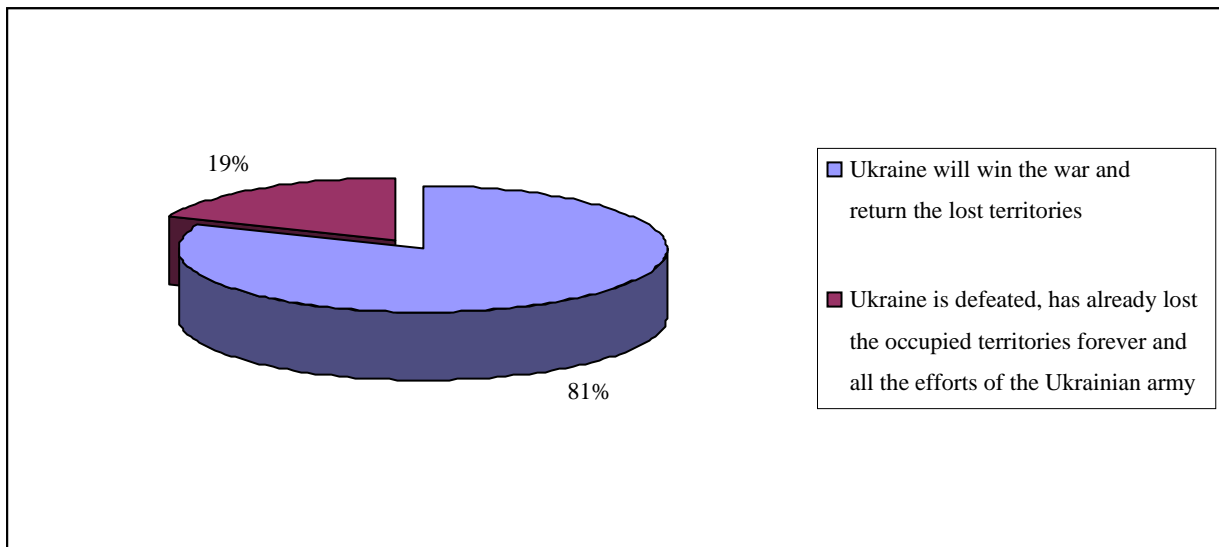


Figure 5. Ukraine’s chances for victory and return of the occupied territories (%)

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of the conducted research

(Ternopil Ivan Puluj National Technical University)

According to the study (Fig. 6), the main desire of Ukrainian students is the desire for peace and war end, where 60% of young Ukrainians are in favour of achieving peace by peaceful means.

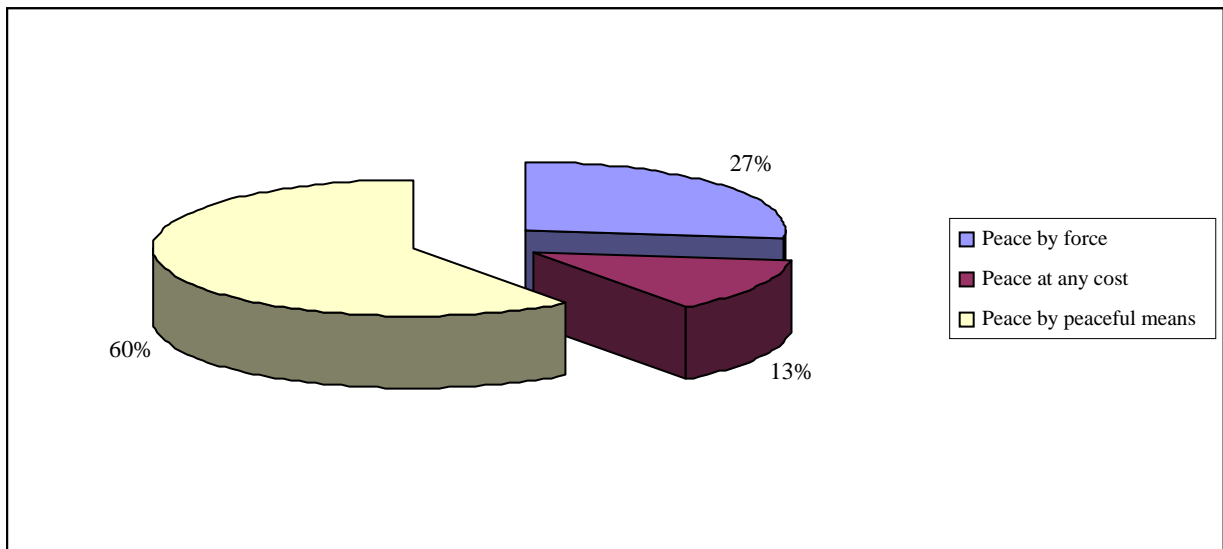


Figure 6. Achieving peace and return of the occupied territories (%)

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of the conducted research

(Ternopil Ivan Puluj National Technical University)

Thus, the current students of TNTU are worthy citizens and patriots of their country, who strive for unity and peace and intend to make their region politically and socio-economically stable.

Conclusions

Analysis of study of the student community's attitude to the military conflict in the Eastern Ukraine showed the following results:

1. The vast majority of respondents are concerned about the tense relations between Ukraine and Russia, so they follow the course of events in the conflict zone.

2. 89% of respondents call this war a war of aggression, and 91% are convinced that Russia is an aggressor country.

3. Half of the respondents consider "people's republics" to be terrorist groups that do not have legitimate rights to represent the interests of population of these territories and take position on the hostilities continuation and return of the lost region.

4. Only 9% of respondents were in favour of separating the occupied territories.

5. 60% of respondents believe that the defence capabilities of the Ukrainian army need further radical reforms, but at the same time 21% of boys and 6% of girls are now ready to defend the borders of Ukraine.

6. 46% of respondents confirmed the fact that their relatives and acquaintances took part in fighting in Donbas, and the vast majority (61%) actively participate in volunteer movements in support of the Ukrainian military and displaced persons.

7. According to 81% of respondents, Ukraine will win the war and return the occupied territories, and the vast majority of them (60%) seek peace by peaceful means.

Thus, modern young generation understands the fact that war in Donbas is not a local, peripheral conflict, neither crisis in Ukraine, nor a civil confrontation, but an ongoing military occupation and armed aggression by Russia against Ukraine, and believes that Ukraine will win in this war and return the lost territories. The study showed that the students of Ternopil Polytechnics are characterized by such a system of values, which is based on feelings of patriotism, commitment to strengthening the statehood, willingness to defend their Homeland. Taking an active civil position, today's students are not indifferent to human misfortunes, socially responsible, have not lost faith in future, in a peaceful future and restoration of the territorial integrity of their country.

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