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Research(ers) in Times of War

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Comparative social science research on the effects of war tends to be characterised by an empirical vacuum for ongoing wars, while the aftermath of wars is often well documented. Reflection on war in retrospect is also of great importance, but at both the individual and political level, memory intervenes and (re-)orders events and their implications. Arguably, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is captured in images and text more immediately and intensively than any war that preceded it. The omnipresence of smartphones and messaging services like Telegram enables bottom-up documentation. In the coming years and decades, this abundance of data will provide a wide variety of entry points for scholars from different disciplines within and beyond the social sciences. However, not all images or text data automatically become the basis of academic research or legal proceedings. Therefore, the collection, processing and archiving of 'usable' data is an important and challenging task.

In addition to the documentation and analysis of the data collected amidst war, research communication also has a significant and visible role to play. The boundaries between the communication of academic expertise, the analysis of the unfolding events against the backdrop of regional expertise, expressions of opinion and policy preferences, and activism are fluid in an extreme situation such as war. Each academic draws the lines for herself/himself, but a perceived need to communicate is shared widely.

The developments preceding Russia's war against Ukraine are well documented in social science research (even if, for structural reasons, country-specific expertise has often been undervalued by the mainstream in disciplines such as political science). Quantitative and qualitative research on Ukraine and Russia has provided a sound basis for understanding the increasingly divergent political systems and societies of the two countries. This tension between Ukraine's democratization and Russia's increasing autocratization is at the heart of this war.

History is often reconceptualised by critical contemporary junctures. In this case, historians are also already effectively drawing attention to the longer-term developments shaping the present. With a certain time lag, sources on key decision-making processes in and around the war and currently inaccessible data, for example on the death toll, will increasingly become available. Based

on sound research ethics, it is or will be possible to ask individuals about their personal experiences of war and displacement, their engagement, networks and attitudes in surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews.

During war, access to the "field" is difficult. The legal framework of Western research institutions restricts access to Ukraine or prohibits it altogether. The war context however, also requires a realistic assessment of what can really be researched on the ground, should access be possible. Western scholars may overestimate their role and importance in empirically documenting what is happening on the ground. In addition to personal risks, there are ethical issues to consider. Research with vulnerable or traumatised individuals during or after war goes hand in hand with a duty of care on the part of the researchers. This applies equally to research in the field and to research with displaced individuals. Ukrainian researchers in Ukraine or abroad also face practical and ethical challenges. What issues can they (and do they want to) address at this point in time? How do both citizens and decision-makers in Ukraine react when they are being interviewed by Ukrainian researchers currently living abroad?

The "field" becomes much more complex through war—it simultaneously becomes more local and more transnational. Something similar is happening within academic structures. The strong presence of Ukrainian researchers in Western and Central European institutions as a result of the war expands existing networks and cooperation. The virtual space also helps to regularly include voices from Ukraine in events and projects. These networks have the potential to establish a sustainable exchange about the challenges of research in war times and to tackle big questions related to this war and its consequences.

Direct everyday contact and numerous virtual connections across research environments and academic disciplines strengthen the mutual understanding of the logics and parameters of academia in different locations. Documentation, communication, and continued university education are part of Ukraine's current struggle for survival. In Ukraine's pre-2022 academic system, the norms and expectations did not always coincide with Western (especially Anglo-Saxon) practices, e.g., in terms of decision-making hierarchies, publications in international (i.e., mostly English-language) journals, or third-party funding. The range of scientific excellence

in Ukraine beyond a small number of internationally visible institutions is currently being recognised. This trend goes beyond the disciplines that deal directly with the war and its consequences. This process is also part of the necessary decolonization of East European studies and a more differentiated public perception of the region.

The focus on Russian history in teaching and public discourse and the central role of Russian language and literature in Slavic studies have mirrored Russia's colonial view of its neighbouring countries, underpinned a one-sided orientation of the public discourse and political misjudgements. Other countries, languages, and cultures in the wider region of Eastern Europe were by and large ignored. On the basis of a now more differentiated perspective of the region, tragically honed during the war, and the numerous personal and institutional connections, a more long-term research agenda and multi-local cooperation can and need to be conceived now.

About the Author

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An important prerequisite for this are opportunities for researchers inside and outside Ukraine that go beyond short-term support measures. Basic practical issues that are unfortunately too often overlooked are part of this rethinking, such as access to expensive international conferences and academic journals.

With the war, the academic landscape in Ukraine is changing. The extent of the destruction, the military and civil engagement of academics and their students, displacement, and the precarious socio-economic situation make a reorganization of academic structures necessary. The many new and intensified networks and the tireless commitment of Ukrainian academics provide the basis for this. Science will play an important role in the reconstruction of Ukraine, which makes it all the more important to anchor support and reforms of academic structures in the plans for recovery.

Brief Overview of the State of Ukraine's Higher Education and Science in Times of War

By Yuliia Yevstiunina, Philipp Christoph Schmäddeke, Tetiana Folhina (Science at Risk Emergency Office—Academic Network Eastern Europe, Berlin)

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In 2014, Ukraine clearly chose the European direction of development, but faced many challenges to its territorial integrity and national security as a whole, as well as to specific spheres of society. The outbreak of hostilities in Donbas and the annexation of Crimea caused significant damage to higher education and science, including significant destruction of infrastructure, forced relocation of higher education institutions to safer territories, and the loss of scientific and pedagogical staff and students. All of this significantly hampered the implementation of European standards of higher education and the implementation of the new Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" adopted in 2014.

A new set of challenges was introduced by Russia's full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022. Under conditions of military aggression, the sphere of higher education and science was again forced to find new ways and forms to continue its activities. The main challenges were the constant bombing and destruction of higher educa-

tion and research institutions, the need to move them to safer areas, the temporary suspension of educational activities, the displacement of educational staff and students both within Ukraine and abroad, the occupation of some territories, and the moral and psychological stress and trauma resulting from direct threats to life.

The experience of organizing distance learning and further scientific and pedagogical online activities during the COVID-19 pandemic proved to be very useful in this extreme situation. In a fairly short time, it was possible to implement the primary tasks to ensure a safe environment and resume the educational process. This was supported not only by administrations and management departments, but also by academic and teaching staff. A large number of academic and teaching staff found themselves in extremely difficult living conditions in Ukraine, within occupied territories, or abroad. Unfortunately, there are no exact statistics on the loss of staff caused by the war and forced migration,