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## Reasons for manpower turnover in the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 1991–2020

### Przyczyny rotacji kadr w Siłach Zbrojnych Ukrainy w latach 1991–2020

#### Abstract

Basing on historical experience and the results of sociological research, the aim of this article is to highlight the reasons for the turnover of personnel in the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 1991–2020, to identify trends in this process in the context of permanent reform of the Ukrainian army and the Russian-Ukrainian war. Using the analysis method and critical approach to sources it was established that the main reasons for the dismissal of servicemen under the contract with the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 1991–2014 were material/motivational. The technology of stimulating servicemen to join the enemy, which was used by the Russian Federation during the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in March 2014 is described as a specific type of staff turnover caused by material/motivational factors. The tendency to gradual change of the reasons of staff turnover from material/motivational to organizational is outlined in 2016–2020.

**Keywords:** manpower turnover; staff turnover; personnel management; the Armed Forces of Ukraine; the Russian-Ukrainian war

#### Abstrakt

Opierając się na doświadczeniach historycznych oraz wynikach badań socjologicznych, celem artykułu jest ukazanie przyczyny rotacji kadr w Siłach Zbrojnych Ukrainy w latach 1991–2020 oraz identyfikacja tendencji w tym procesie w kontekście permanentnej reformy armii ukraińskiej i rosyjsko-ukraińskiej wojny. Wykorzystując metodę analizy i krytycznego podejścia do źródeł, ustalono, że głównymi przyczynami zwolnienia żołnierzy na podstawie

kontraktu Sił Zbrojnych Ukrainy w latach 1991–2014 były kwestie materialne/motywacyjne. Opisano proces zachęcania żołnierzy do przyłączenia się do wroga, który został wykorzystany przez Federację Rosyjską podczas okupacji Autonomicznej Republiki Krymu w marcu 2014 roku, jako specyficzny rodzaj rotacji personelu wywołanej czynnikami materialnymi/motywacyjnymi. Zanalizowano także tendencję stopniowej zmiany przyczyn rotacji personelu z materialnej/motywacyjnej na organizacyjną, która zarysowuje się w latach 2016–2020.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rotacja kadr; zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi; Siły Zbrojne Ukrainy; wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska

## Introduction

Today the system of personnel management in the Armed Forces of Ukraine should undergo the reform in spite of difficult conditions. Despite the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and the need to consolidate the efforts of the entire Ukrainian society to repel it, about 65% of servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine are released after the first contract expires. Although it is stated that the number of Ukrainian troops is 250,000 people, the current number is about 130,000, and possibly fewer (Grant, 2021).

During the war, despite the best efforts of the state to stop the turnover before the former or – as potential servicemen opened better in comparison with military service to civilian employment opportunities in the labor market, and Ukraine is donating labor to other countries with the index of 5.9 millions of labor migrants (13.4% of the population) (NGO «Come back alive», 2020). Therefore, finding out the reasons for the turnover of personnel in the Armed Forces of Ukraine becomes very important.

## Methods

The purpose of the paper is to establish the reasons for the turnover of personnel in the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 1991–2020. The analysis method and critical approach to sources was used. The analysis and comparison of statistics and data from reports, opinion polls among young officers about the motivation to serve from the defined period help to draw final conclusions.

## Results and discussion

During the period 1991–2014, the military profession in Ukraine was not prestigious. On the eve of the Russian aggression, the servicemen ceased to be respected by the Ukrainian society. The attitude towards servicemen during the years of independence changed from respectful and fascinating to pretentious (Pidopryhora, 2018, pp. 81–89). Last but not least, this was due to the poor financial situation of the

armed forces. During the period 1991–2014, the Armed Forces of Ukraine created a system of material support and incentives, social protection for servicemen and their families. However, due to the difficult economic situation and insufficient funding of its Armed Forces, Ukraine was unable to provide a sufficient material security and social protection for their servicemen, and at the same time requiring them to perform their duties to the state in good faith.

The economic crisis in Ukraine caused that the social significance of military service (the attitude of ordinary citizens and servicemen to military service) was determined primarily by material and living conditions, the level of financial security and social protection. In particular, opinion polls among young officers showed that, despite the predominance of patriotism as one of the motivational variable for choosing a military profession, about a third of respondents associated military service with material benefits. The need to ensure a high level of financial security and social protection was caused by the legal regulations which restricted a long list of servicemen' constitutional rights, including those that could be profitable (including participation in political parties and business activity). Thus, the material support for servicemen and benefits for their families had to adequately compensate for the almost round-the-clock employment of the head of the family in the military service. At the same time, the financial support of the Armed Forces of Ukraine was low compared to other countries – if in early 1994 the captain of the US Army received about \$ 3,500, the captain of the German army – about \$ 2,940, the captain of the Russian Armed Forces – \$140–\$150, then the captain of the Armed Forces of Ukraine – only \$30–\$32. As of 1999, the amount of cash security did not allow officers to feed their families and forced them to work and earn outside the service, which was illegal. In addition, in the second half of the 1990s there were delays in the payment of cash benefits to servicemen, and in 2000, for the first time since Ukraine's independence, budget savings were made by suspending social guarantees for servicemen. This exacerbated negative emotions among contract officers and servicemen – in 1999, according to opinion polls, more than 80% of officers rated their family's financial situation as low and below average, and about 57% of officers considered their mood close to apathy or depression (Avtushenko, 2019, pp. 63, 71–73, 111, 145, 203–209).

Almost all aspects of the lives of servicemen and members of their families depended on financial opportunities, including the organization of recreation and leisure. Insufficient funding of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 1991–2013 did not allow servicemen (especially officers and servicemen of contract service) to fully develop, meet their spiritual and aesthetic needs (Avtushenko, 2019, pp. 189–195).

We state that the difficult economic situation, the lack of improvement of material security and social protection of servicemen actually made it impossible for the Armed Forces of Ukraine to quickly switch to staffing only contract servicemen. A clear confirmation of this is the historical experience of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which in accordance with the Order of the President of Ukraine of

May 16, 2005 №1043/2005-RP “On measures to transition units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to contract” during 2005–2012, an experiment was conducted with 100% staffing of military units by contract servicemen (Commander of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Order no. 547 of November 20, 2005).

First, active efforts to recruit soldiers successfully were taken in 2005 when 488 servicemen signed contract for the military service for 7 months and only 4 servicemen were released (Military Council of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Resolution no. 17/2 of April 21, 2006). In September 2005, 50% of staffing was contracted under 1st separate marines battalion and a large landing ship „Konstantin Olshansky” (Commander of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Order no. 547 of November 20, 2005).

However, due to the lack of improvement of material security and social protection, housing and living conditions, lack of full combat training due to the lack of fuel and lubricants in 2006 there was a decrease in staffing of some military units and ships (including the large landing ship “Konstantin Olshansky” military service under the contract was accepted by 24 people, and at the same time 16 servicemen were released) (Military Council of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Resolution no. 17/2 of April 21, 2006).

This negative trend developed in the following years. In particular, between January and April 2007, 147 people were recruited and 153 were discharged (Commander of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Order no. 159 of June 11, 2007); as of February 21, 2008 has marked a rather low percentage of staffing, instead of 55% prescribed legal staffing crew frigate “Hetman Sahaidachny” accounted for 11% corvette “Lutsk” – 24% corvette, “Ternopil” – 27%, the intelligence ship “Slavutich” – 23%, artillery boat “Skadovsk” – 29%, assault company of the 1st separate marines battalion – 20% (Commander of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Order no. 59 of February 26, 2008); and in the first five months of 2009 in the Coast Guard, the number of servicemen who retired after the expiration of the contract exceeded the number of conscripts (Pidopryhora, 2020, pp. 512–516).

In general, the leadership of the Armed Forces of Ukraine was forced to state that the amount of funding in 2008–2009 did not allow to provide favorable conditions for military service under the contract and the level of social guarantees for servicemen determined by current legislation was low (Pidopryhora, 2020, pp. 512–516).

Thus, the main reasons for the dismissal of servicemen under contract with the Navy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 2005–2012 were material (low level of financial security and housing, insufficient material and food security, social protection) or the lack of full-fledged combat training due to lack of fuel and lubricants, military service under contract work due to lack of funds for hiring civilian personnel, lack of funds for recreation and leisure of servicemen), that is, staff turnover was influenced mainly by motivational factors.

However, among the reasons for dismissal can be both tangible and intangible, including organizational reasons (focus of the commanders only on the quantitative

increase of servicemen under contract, disorderly working hours and rest time, the formation of commanders' relations with servicemen on contract based on past Soviet stereotypes) (Military Council of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Resolution no. 17/2 of April 21, 2006; Commander of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Order no. 159 of June 11, 2007).

It should also be noted that the organizational reasons were more pronounced in the staffing of the Armed Forces of Ukraine with junior officers (commanders of platoons (groups) of ground units, combat units of ships or pilots). Thus, the level of staffing of positions filled by junior officers from 2006 to 2011 decreased from 87.8% to 56.7%. There is no doubt that the frustration of junior officers with the low level of material security in the future led to a shortage of staff, and the financial and economic components only intensified the trend of officer turnover. However, according to the then Chief Inspector for Humanitarian and Social Security of the Main Inspectorate of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, colonel V. Fedichev, in 2010 the understaffing of junior officers arose primarily due to miscalculations in forecasting the required number of graduates of tactical level. Graduates were less than the real need and gradually decreased in number (Avtushenko, 2019, pp. 145, 156–157).

It is interesting to establish the reasons for staff turnover in the period of 2013–early 2014 – the time of the full transition of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to the staffing of servicemen under contract. We note that at that time the full staffing of military service under the contract was largely due to increased funding. After all, only after doubling the financial support of this category of servicemen for 9 months of 2013, 2,200 contractors were called up, which is 5 times more than in 2012. Despite the fact that even after the increase in funding, there were still negative aspects of the material nature (in particular, the issue of housing was not resolved), the ship's staff was 100% staffed under contract, intelligence, special forces and marines – in 90%. At the end of 2013, Rear Admiral I. Tymchuk, Chief of the Personnel Department of Navy, stated that the Navy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine was 85% contracted and allowed to perform assigned tasks. And as of the beginning of 2014, the Ukrainian fleet was staffed exclusively by contract servicemen (Pidopryhora, 2020, pp. 512–516; Mamchak, 2019, pp. 53, 116–117).

Thus, until 2014, the staff turnover in the Armed Forces of Ukraine was predominantly influenced by the material factors – the economic situation in the country and related insufficient financial security, unsatisfactory provision of property and housing, non-compliance with other state benefits and advantages. According to I. Avtushenko, it was the unresolved social problems of servicemen that prompted a significant part of the personnel of the Ukrainian Navy to join the Russian Armed Forces in March 2014 and remain in the annexed Crimea (Avtushenko, 2019, pp. 116–117). It is significant that servicemen of the 36th separate coast defense brigade of the Ukrainian Navy, who did not want to join the aggressor after the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, were discharged from the military service “for non-compliance with the contract by the state” that is, due to the state's

failure to comply with its material obligations to the servicemen (Avtushenko, 2019, pp. 116–117).

We believe that in the situation of “hybrid war” the transition of Ukrainian servicemen to the armed forces of the Russian Federation in Crimea (actually betrayal and transition to the enemy) should be regarded as a specific type of staff turnover caused by material/motivational factors. In general, after the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, only about 30% of servicemen were redeployed or arrived in other Ukrainian regions. As of April 25, 2014, 9,268 Ukrainian servicemen who going served to the armed forces of Russian Federation, received Russian citizenship (including 2,768 officers, 1,302 warrant officers, 5,007 sailors and 191 cadets). In total, together with civilian personnel, more than 16,000 people were accepted into the Russian Federation. In fact, due to the transfer of Ukrainian servicemen, there was a significant replenishment of the armed forces of the Russian Federation (Pidopryhora, 2020, p. 351).

The technology developed in March 2014 in Crimea to encourage servicemen to join the enemy was used by the Russian Federation before (particularly in 1992–1997 during the parceling of the Black Sea Fleet of the former USSR) and has become an important part of information and psychological operations against Ukraine. This technology should be given more attention in view of its possible application against other post-Soviet states, which Russia considers to be an area of its interests (Pidopryhora, 2020, pp. 115–129, 274, 475–488).

In 2016, during the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war, specialists of the Research Center for Humanitarian Problems of the Armed Forces of Ukraine conducted a military-sociological study “The level of moral and psychological readiness of personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to perform assigned tasks and factors influencing it” (2017). According to the results of the study, the level of moral and psychological readiness was assessed as average (3.69 points) on a five-point scale. It was also found that the level of moral and psychological readiness of personnel was influenced by a significant number of factors of various kinds. The shortage of personnel and the intentions of a significant number of personnel to resign from the Armed Forces of Ukraine had the most negative impact. It is interesting that the “traditional” factors for the Ukrainian army – satisfaction with money and material security – had a lesser effect on the level of readiness. Satisfaction with the relationship with commanders (superiors) and colleagues, the cohesion of the team and the state of military discipline had the most positive effect. According to the survey, the intentions of servicemen to resign from the Armed Forces of Ukraine were the most alarming in terms of long-term forecasts (in particular, more than 11.0% of respondents unequivocally stated their intention to resign, another 17% were undecided about future service). 62% of the surveyed servicemen had some negative attitude towards possible emigration outside Ukraine, however, one in five (22.6%) suggested such a possibility (Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, 2017, p. 105).

It should be noted that at the time of the study, the financial situation of servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in general allowed to meet their basic needs, but this level did not meet the level of a prosperous life (for example, did not allow to buy a house, apartment, car, etc.). Compared to the data of the 2012 poll, when similar problems were investigated, the financial situation of servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine has improved. At the same time, a significant part of the respondents still pointed out the insufficient level of financial security. The issue of improving living conditions has not lost its relevance, as only about 40% of families of servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine had their own apartments or houses. At the same time, concerns about the living conditions of families in the event of the death of a serviceman were raised (Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, 2017, p. 105). That is, in 2016, despite some relevance, motivational factors were no longer decisive for the release of servicemen from the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

In 2020, a sociological study prepared by the analytical department of the public organization “Come back alive!” was published, which covered current issues of staff turnover in the Armed Forces of Ukraine as of the second half of 2019 (NGO «Come back alive», 2020). This study revealed real problems that affect the desire of Ukrainian servicemen to continue their contract service. In particular, it was found that among the factors influencing the decision to enter into a new contract, motivational factors (social benefits, cash and housing) are not decisive. Despite the fact that financial security plays not the least role in motivating people to military service, and the decision to go to military service is made by candidates, including under the influence of the economic situation in the country, the decision to extend the contract is more influenced by organizational factors, servicemen from the military system, quality of management and leadership, balance of working and personal time, filling of military service, problems of bureaucracy) (NGO «Come back alive», 2020).

That is, in fact, in 2016–2020, the material reasons for staff turnover (due to some improvement in the financial condition of servicemen and the level of their social protection) gave way to other reasons – organizational. This should be considered a tendency of gradual change of the causes for staff turnover from material/motivational (in 1991–2014) to organizational (in 2016–2020).

## Conclusions

Thus, the reasons for staff turnover in the Armed Forces of Ukraine during 1991–2020 were not stable and gradually changed. Until 2014, the predominant factors were of material/motivational nature – insufficient level of financial security, unsatisfactory housing, non-compliance with other social guarantees declared by the state. These reasons contributed to the transition of a significant part of the personnel of the Navy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to serve in the armed forces of the Russian Federation in the initial period of Russian armed aggression.

Starting from 2016, the main reasons were organizational, which outlined the tendency of gradual change of reasons for the turnover of staff from material/motivational to organizational.

Further research will focus on a comprehensive study of the identified causes, establishing the consequences of their actions and making proposals to reduce staff turnover.

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