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Trauma and Resilience within Ukraine: How the Russian Full-Scale Invasion in 2022 Effectuated Changes in Identity

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Declaration of Authorship

I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints, ideas or data taken from other authors or other sources have been referenced.

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This thesis is dedicated to the citizens and residents of Ukraine, whose resiliency in the face of undue adversity should be a model for the world.

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Abstract

This thesis aims to show the juxtaposition that War creates in the formulation of creating a new collective national identity in Ukraine via the markers of trauma and resilience, especially within the youth of Ukraine, who have not yet experienced trauma at the hands of Russia. A second point of the thesis is to provide clarity as to the interconnectedness of the concepts of trauma, resilience, and identity. The interplay between these three concepts rests upon War creating a traumatogenic event, which rapidly and significantly alters identity. Trauma has the ability to either amplify vulnerability or can facilitate the development of resiliency which subsequently becomes a defining characteristic of the collective national identity.

Interviews were conducted on site in Ukraine from March 17 until March 30. A total of 14 interviews were conducted: 5 face to face and 9 via Zoom. Respondents were all Ukrainian citizens who were between ages 19-30, meaning that they fit the definition of youth and Post-Soviet. Thematic analysis (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017) was used to code themes from the interviews. 3 concepts produced 3 theoretical frameworks, each linking with one another. The triad of lay trauma theory (Alexander, 2004), resilience theory (van Breda, 2001) (Bourbeau, 2017), and social identity theory (Hogg, 2018) were applied.

The results produced via thematic analysis consisted of the validation that the trauma of the full-scale invasion has had the effect of unification of both Ukrainians as well as political institutions and civil society. A shared trauma coupled with proximity to displaced individuals ignored previously held prejudices pertaining to regional differences. A schism from the narrative of "one people" within Russkiy Mir (Kasianov, 2022) had the effect of returning to previous markers such as individuality, open-mindedness, tolerance, and independence. The research conducted has shown that the changes in identity through trauma and the adherence to democratic resilience were sudden and impactful. Limitations remain in the form of answering whether these changes are, indeed, long-term.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The full-scale incursion into Ukrainian territory by Russia, beginning on February 24, 2022, has rekindled generational and historical traumas among the populace of Ukraine. The elderly demographic has experienced a world where Russia invariably remained at the focal point, as either ally or adversary. For Ukrainian youth, however, Russia has predominantly been an economic influence, rather than a cultural one. Preceding the War, particularly in the Western and Central regions of Ukraine, young individuals had been gravitating away from Russian dominance within the Ukrainian sphere, opting instead to chart their own course towards their self-determined ideals and values, aligning more closely with the West. This movement has manifested itself in various ways, including the fortification of democracy through rigorous journalism, the amplification of the digital economic sphere, and the enhancement of civil society in a symbiotic relationship with the government, despite the ongoing warfare (Drukman, 2022). Consequently, the full-scale invasion, has created the opportunity in Ukraine to become more resilient and to precipitously reorganize its collective national identity, distancing itself from Russia, which has subdued it in the past, the effect of which, can be found in the generational trauma of Ukrainians. War, as a method of breaking a nation down and building it back up, has become the "primary organizing principle of society (Hardt and Negri, 2005: 12)" in Ukraine.

The ensuing invasion and the resultant trauma have compelled Ukrainian youth to reassess, renegotiate, and reconcile their collective national identity. War constitutes an abrupt and severe assault on identity, posing threats on physical, emotional, cultural, and existential levels, aiming to eradicate it. This trauma, dubbed "Ukrainian Syndrome", denotes a "behavioral pattern of adaptation and an individual position of a Ukrainian regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war" (Matiash et al, 2023). Paradoxically, out of this trauma, resilience can emerge. This resilience does not pacify identity, as the aggressor might hope, but instead reconfigures it into something more robust and cohesive. Despite the narrative emanating out of Russia, few Ukrainians supported reunification with Russia and around 90% of Ukrainians viewed the state of Ukraine as their homeland (Erlich, 2022). While Ukrainian identity traits have been renegotiated since the War, the inherent knowledge of their roots and their homeland were always present.

Initial expectations of a swift governmental collapse in Kyiv were abated as Ukrainian endurance and resilience have kept their nation afloat. As Ukrainian Defense Minister

Rezhnikov recently declared in an interview, "The U.S. intelligence community anticipated that Kyiv would fall within 72 hours of the first Russian missiles landing in Ukraine… [but] we understand Russians better than our partners do, particularly their methods of waging war" (Weiss and Rushton, 2023). Ukraine, in many respects, has been engaged in this war for centuries, learning how to fend off Russian invaders from its homeland, adapting to each previous setback. This presents a quintessential scenario of a lose the battle but win the war mentality.

The present research undertakes an exploration into the war's impact on the triad of identity, trauma, and resilience, with a particular focus on the perspective of Ukrainian youth. Despite being considered an underdog by external political and military entities, Ukraine has defied the odds for over a year as "Ukrainian society has shown a determination to fight back against the more resourceful invader, which boosted Ukraine's positions both in the battlefields and in relations with its international partners (Kurnyshova, 2023: 2)". They have resisted the ostensible superior might of the Russian military, which has inflicted considerable trauma upon them. But Ukraine would not be deterred in proactively showcasing, from their trauma, a level of resilience rivaling that of countries with longer democracies and consolidated identities. Ukraine's transformation from being within the sphere of Russian influence and a "little brother" (Kattan, 2022) to being hailed as a defender of the "degenerate West (Kuzio, 2018: 531)", despite not being a member of NATO or the E.U., signifies an extraordinary turn of events. The collective national identity has been instrumental in mobilizing civil society and political elites in Ukraine to adopt a more proactive stance in rebuffing Russia. Within these parameters, this research aims to answer the research question:

Has the War in Ukraine altered the collective or national identity of youth in Ukraine? Has the trauma of the war coalesced the young citizenry into a civic and national milieu and has this trauma created the opportunity for resilience within civil society, as it pertains to the youth?

The initial segment of this thesis will engage in an exploration of the conceptualizations and definitions of trauma, resilience, and identity. This section will scrutinize the works of Carpentier (2015) and Alexander (2004) concerning trauma, positing that trauma constitutes a vulnerability engendered at a collective and national level when confronted with an existential threat to culture, such as an invasion intending to eradicate the Ukrainian identity.

Resilience will be delineated through the contributions of Chandler and Coaffee (2017), Bourbeau (2017), and Teperik et al. (2018), conceptualizing it as an ecological, and consequently political, notion of adaptation via vulnerability, in relation to trauma, with potential outcomes consisting of the preservation of a pre-existing identity or the emergence and establishment of a novel collective national identity. Consequently, the organism – in this instance, the state, civil society, or Ukrainian citizens – rejuvenates their identities through adversity; the result of which is a reified comprehension of the foundations of rendering "Ukraine becoming more Ukrainian" (Arel, 2018) (Oleinikova, 2022). The identity section will incorporate Hall (1999) and Hjerm (2011), elucidating the differentiation of the concept "collective national identity" to signify that collective and national identity are interconnected through the molding of political institutions, which, in the Ukrainian context, constitutes a more unified state with democratic reforms. The perpetuation of these reforms during the War and the overall "functionality of Ukrainian state apparatus and public institutions under the dire conditions is a key factor defining Ukraine's agency grounded in what might be dubbed 'democratic resilience', or the ability of a political regime to prevent or react to challenges without losing its 'democratic character' (Kurnyshova, 2023: 14) (Merkel and Luhrmann, 2023: 872).

The subsequent portion of the thesis will explicate how these concepts are germane to the specific case study examining the ramifications following the inception of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Ukraine's historical narrative is replete with appropriation and subjugation at the hands of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, among others. Consequently, Ukraine has been compelled to mollify its own identity and assume that of its conquerors. The full-scale invasion transpiring in 2022 rekindled the generational trauma Ukraine has endured due to Russian hegemony, while simultaneously superimposing a contemporary stratum of physical and psychological trauma that the youth had thus far evaded. Although instances of Russia infringing upon Ukrainian territory, sovereignty, and agency have occurred, such as interference in previous elections and the inception of the War in 2014, these events did not constitute existential assaults on identity and culture. The attempt by Russia in 2022 to erase Ukrainian identity by asserting that Ukrainian and Russian cultures are indistinguishable impelled Ukrainians to reclaim the narrative and reevaluate the underpinnings of their identity.

The third segment of the thesis will delineate the methodology employed, which will encompass the qualitative approach utilizing the technique of interviewing. Sampling was

executed either in person or online across the four regions of Ukraine: West, Central, East, and South. The target demographic will consist of individuals aged 18-30, as this cohort fits under the definition of "youth" in the E.U (Eurostat, 2023), except the age of 30, and lacks direct experience of the USSR and. While generational memory of this era will continue to influence Ukrainian culture and identity, no empirical trauma from this occurrence will be present in Ukrainian youth. Field research will be undertaken in Ukraine, engaging with Ukrainian nationals who have stayed, excluding the variable of an additional cultural contamination. Gender and socioeconomic status will also be randomized to ensure a more accurate representation of identity. A total of 2-5 interviews will be conducted per region.

The fourth segment of this thesis will undertake a comprehensive analysis of the conducted interviews, culminating in a series of insights derived from the thematic coding of the 14 interviews undertaken. These interviews, executed on location within Ukraine, comprised respondents from the four geographical quadrants of Ukraine mentioned above. The collected data was subdivided through the utilization of thematic analysis, with core themes of Trauma, Freedom, History, Resilience, and Independence and their interplay with collective national identity emerging prominently in the responses. The researcher journeyed to Ukraine in March 2023 to amass this data, premised on the belief that physical presence in Ukraine would engender a level of empathetic trust conducive to eliciting more nuanced responses (Patton, 2015).

The fifth segment of the thesis will elaborate upon the outcomes derived from the results, delineating the prospective political implications of a Ukraine characterized by trauma and resilience, and the potential ramifications for both Western and Russian entities as they navigate future pathways towards the strengthening of agency and democratic institutions.

This thesis seeks to contribute to the body of pre-invasion scholarly discourse pertaining to shifts in Ukrainian identity and the transformative impacts of war on such shifts. The investigation will delve into the underpinnings that lend these changes their enduring nature, dismissing them as mere short-term fluctuations destined to revert to pre-war conditions. These aforementioned conditions encompass perceptions of victimhood as a subordinate of Russia, a sense of estrangement from their territorial homeland, reliance on Russian media outlets, and regional disunity. The incorporation of resilience into this research, predicated on the thesis's demonstration of the long-term political ramifications of sociological shifts in identity, and the trauma that underscores it, reflects the pertinence of this research. What

implications will these transformative shifts have on Ukraine's future institutions and civil society? Has this war precipitated the emergence of a novel collective national identity wherein an independent Ukraine can thrive? The following sections will elaborate on these points.

2. Conceptualization

This section defines the three primary concepts of the thesis: Trauma, Resiliency, and Identity, specifically how they pertain to War and temporality. A discussion of the case study of Ukraine will follow.

2.1 Trauma

Trauma, as a political concept, extends to both collective and institutional organizations, not purely individuals. Conceptually, trauma functions to consolidates a group that shared the traumatic events and memorializes it in their minds. These traumatic or "traumatogenic changes [are] sudden, comprehensive, fundamental, and unexpected (Sztompka: 2004: 159)", with War and foreign conquest as categorically operative. As War is a profound, shared event that resonates through the collective, its sudden genesis pushes forward the need for collective identity reconfiguration. War, particularly war involving violence, as opposed to non-violent war such as cyber warfare, can create a shift in identity due to its capability to cause dissonance within the cultural zeitgeist. War is a sui generis instigator of trauma, precipitating an environment of insecurity. Furthermore, as lives and livelihoods are altered and people are physically displaced, so is their identity; the sense of safety being fragmented. This shared cultural trauma can displace a previous identity built on security to one that centers around the memory of insecurity.

Shared trauma creates a new perspective which, inter alia, creates a new collective, cultural, and national identity. As explained by Alexander, "cultural trauma occurs when members of a collective feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways (Alexander, 2004: 1)." Trauma is a unifier wherein "shared experience of trauma [bring] people together (Evans and Reid, 2017: 335)," consolidating collective identity. In a political sense, trauma can bind society as a nation and allow for government institutions to implement further schemes to incorporate a sense of oneness within the newly formed collective and national identity. The juxtaposition of the concepts of both collective and national trauma and identity are used interchangeable in this thesis as previous research has shown that "all collective traumas have some bearing on national identity (Smelser, 2004: 43) (Neal, 2018: 31)". Henceforth, collective, cultural, and national trauma will be referenced as a single defined concept.

Trauma is both an immediate shock to the system as well as a lingering feeling of dread that is imprinted onto the memory. Alexander posits that "an event traumatizes a collectivity because it is an extraordinary event…that it creates radical change within a short period of time (Alexander, 2004: 3)," due to trauma's ability to dissolve previously negotiated rules that the collective or nation lives under. "Traumatic status…[is] believed to have abruptly, and harmfully, affected collective identity (Alexander, 2004: 10)" insofar as it removes a feeling of security. The first response to this new upheaval causes the group to look inward and identify the cause of the trauma. The second response is to reconfigure the event both in memory and in practice, whether in culture or through policy, to ensure that recidivism does not occur. The "Self", in this instance, acts out of a survival instinct to dispel weakness, as failure to accommodate the pursues the identity of "Victim". As the "Self" is restructured, changes in identity express themselves through a series of introspective moments from which the scar created must be dealt with.

War is not a one-sided event that creates a locus on the "Self" inherently but affects the culture of those at war vis a vis "the edges of imagined communities at war, which are blurred in more normal circumstances, [thus] become impenetrable frontiers between us vs them, between the Self and the Enemy (Carpentier, 2015: 2)." This newly created "Self" and "Enemy" dichotomy can be a strengthening adhesive to collective national identity. As Carpentier explains, "the construction of the Enemy is accompanied by the construction of the identity of the Self as clearly antagonistic to the Enemy's identity…the enemy is presented as a threat to our own identity (Carpentier, 2015: 2)," and the collective national identity consolidates with the creation of the "Other", shaping differences.

Trauma does not just affect the individual but culture as a whole. The separation of individual and collective trauma is that "for traumas to emerge at the level of the collectivity, social crisis must become cultural crisis (Alexander, 2004: 10)" and that "wounds inflicted to culture are most difficult to heal…[as]…cultural traumas are enduring, lingering (Sztompka, 2004: 162)" through collective memory. Individual trauma may be a daily occurrence that does not unweave the fabric of society. Individuals go through a myriad of traumatic events that typically do not cause changes to collective identity, as the rules-based system of collective order holds steadfast. War trauma is not only held onto on an individual level but reverberates through the collective and its culture. Carpentier succinctly explains that "war trauma is more than the aggregation of individual traumata…it is a knot typing together representation, the past, the self, the political and suffering, that continues to structure a

culture, for generations and decades (Carpentier, 2015: 9) (Buelens et al, 2014: 4)," as it is inextricably linked to collective memory of the traumatic event. War trauma, differing from individual trauma, can be expressed as "fear of losing life and/or freedom, grief, separation from families, social isolation, social disruption and forced migration (Jawaid et al, 2022: 748)".

Furthermore, trauma can be defined as "not only physical, but also psychological (Carpentier, 2015: 9)," in that it affects the psyche of the collective and causes a schism from the daily order that felt secure. The psychological component of trauma is what displaces that psyche and causes a cultural shift. The psychological component of war and trauma is what imprints it onto the collective, cultural, and national memory, which does not simply end once the physical aspect of the war has finished. As Carpentier states, "war is a dislocation that disrupts social and cultural structures, and that continues to do so after the violence ends (Carpentier, 2015: 9)," as these destroyed former structures need to be rebuilt.

Smelser defines cultural trauma as "an invasive and overwhelming event that is believed to undermine and overwhelm one or several ingredients of a culture or the culture as a whole (Alexander, 2004: 38) (Smelser, 2004: 38)," which, in turn, creates cultural dissonance and necessitates the rebuilding of the cultural identity. The speed at which a culture can adapt and rebuild to the negative stimuli of war and cultural trauma exemplifies the resilience of the community.

2.2 Resilience

Resilience, as a concept, has been widely studied within IR. Resilience is "how we seek to understand, manage, and solve the wicked riddle of uncertain times" (Rogers, 2017: 13)," as the concept of collective identity and culture are not pre-defined and fixed, but constructed concepts that are ever-changing. Societies, nations, and cultures are in constant flux when it comes to their security and the basis in which their identity and institutions remain duress. The way in which they either hold or adapt can be measured by their resilient aptitude. Here, resilience can be seen as "the capacity of the system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks" (Rogers, 2017: 15) (Walker et al, 2004)." This definition, however, does not fully encapsulate the meaning of resilience. Resilience, for a nation, is not only seeking to remain with similar functionality but to readily accept that changes occur abruptly and to resolutely focus on the beneficial and transformative properties of trauma. In this sense,

resiliency has to do with the ways in which a collective has "the capacity to cope with unanticipated dangers" and to "bounce back" stronger than before from traumata and threatening stimuli (Rogers, 2017:16) (Wildavsky, 1988: 77). The following section will delve into the conceptual framework of the term resilience and how it creates a framework between the collective of a nation and those with institutional power.

The genesis of the term resilience is not from political theory but from biology. The first instance of the concept of resilience was used in the study of organisms and ecosystems. This "ecological resilience" was defined as the "capacity of a system to experience disturbances and still maintain its ongoing functions and controls…the persistence of relationships within a system and is a measure for these systems to absorb change and still persist (Bourbeau, 2017: 27)." In essence, resilience focused on how well a system could absorb a shock and come back stronger. Lightning may strike a tree in a forest causing a fire that engulfs a portion of the area, but the fire forces the trees to evolve and adapt by having stronger barks or to evolve a way of using fire as a means of spreading its spores. Evolution is the outcome of resilience. This idea has been reconfigured to fit the social sciences with the newly evolved concept of socio-ecological resilience which focuses on "the opportunities that emerge, in terms of self-organization, recombination, and the emergence of new trajectories. (Chandler and Coaffee, 2017: 27) (Bourbeau, 2017: 27) (Walker and Meyers, 2004)."

According to Rogers, resilience is "the positive elasticity of spirit in human actors resulting from exposure to negative stimuli (Rogers, 2017: 15)." War, and the trauma that accompanies it, stretches the boundaries of both physical and psychological security and how the internal motivation of the collective can be stretched and fall back into place is, inherently, resilience. Furthermore, resilience is not simply a reaction to an event but "describes ways in which life learns from catastrophes so that it can be more responsive to catastrophes on the horizon (Evans and Reid, 2017: 331)." In other words, resilience is primarily about adaptation. It is about learning from a traumatic experience and taking measured steps to ensure that a collective, nation, or culture is not only reactive to future threats, but is prepared to take preventative measures.

These definitions primarily elucidate resilience in terms of future perspective. Resilience is about learning and adapting and how effectively a society can take its past trauma and strengthen its resolve. "If resilience represents anything, it represents the possibility of change (Rogers, 2017: 14);" specifically a change in its readiness to combat future threats.

The principle of resilience, defined in Article 3 of the Alliance Treaty, is the "ability of society to withstand threats, to recover after them, i.e., combines civilian readiness and military capabilities (Bondarenko et al, 2021: 88)." Recovery is an important aspect of resilience because it shows the resolve to learn from traumatic events instead of being vulnerable under the power of destructive memory. How the event is perceived and how it is dealt with are at the core of a resilient society.

Resilience is a spectrum or as Teperik et al explains, there can be a "values gap in strengthening national resilience (Teperik et al, 2018: 11)" whereby a collective must agree to being resilient in the first place. Without a shared identity, the will to be resilient dissipates because coping as a collective cannot occur without an agreement to do so. Without an agreement on values, the collective cannot maintain resiliency because it has no standard for which to bounce back to. Resilience, then, is not consistent within an organism or group, but dynamic and ever-changing. Resilience plays a role in collective identity as it "creates shared knowledge and information that will continually reshape the forms of communities and affirm those core values which are deemed absolutely 'vital' to our ways of living (Evans and Reid, 2017: 337)". Therefore, core values, and the desire by the collective to uphold them, are a prerequisite to resilience.

As stated earlier, resilience is not only formulated at the individual and collective level but at the national level as well. The actions and policies of the political elite trickle down to civil society. According to Fiala, "national resilience has many aspects to it, among them are national identity, psychological preparation, identification and reduction of vulnerabilities, and identification of and preparation against the threat (Fiala, 2022)." Without a strong fostered national identity, psychological preparedness based on previous trauma, and an acute awareness of threats and vulnerabilities, a nation cannot be resilient insofar as it will not have the tools necessary to bounce back stronger. Another important factor, and "the strongest correlate" to national resilience, is interpersonal trust (Goodwin et al, 2023: 3). The collective, the nation, the in-group, must have trust within each other to fulfill the roles necessary to be able to achieve the success of battling through adversity. Without interpersonal trust, collective national cohesion is non-existent as groups lack a binding force.

A furthering of national resilience and a political marker for this thesis is the concept of democratic resilience via Berthin. According to Berthin, "democratic resilience involves the ability of the system to: absorb stress or pressure (elasticity); overcome challenges or crises

(recovery); change in response to stress in the system (reform/adaptation); and reform to address challenges or crises more efficiently and effectively (innovation/expansion) (Berthin, 2022)". Democratic resilience operates when, rather than institutions diminish their democratic tendencies, they instead adapt, renew, and fortify. In short, "democracy resilience refers to the ability of a democratic socio-political system to cope, survive and recover from complex challenges and crises that represent stresses or pressures that can lead to a systemic failure. (Berthin, 2022)". Ukraine, through the power of state institutions and a partnership with civil society, has largely eluded these failures, keeping its government running throughout the War. The implications of these partnerships and self-reliance between the two actors, envisages the 'shifting of responsibility onto communities and promotion of reflexive self-governance through strategies of awareness, risk management and adaptability (Humbert & Joseph 2019: 216) (Kurnyshova, 2023: 6)", of which the outcome is a more potent resiliency. The government, refusing to evacuate at the early stages of the invasion, empowered not only their democracy to remail resilient, but for their society as well. This shock decision emboldened the concerted response from the nation that trauma will not be a defining trait but serve to reinforce the desire for agency, without a "constant eye for Moscow's opinions (Kurnyshova, 2023: 5)", and a groundswell of resistance; long a part of tradition in the form of "mass-scale emancipatory protests against injustice (Kurnyshova, 2023: 5)". The operationalization of trauma, historically latent, served to reify resilience as a part of the collective national identity.

The defining early moment in the War in Ukraine may have been President Zelensky's decision to stay in Kyiv instead of exfiltration. This resolve showed a dedication to an ideal that the resilience of the Ukrainian people would not be deterred. This, in turn, strengthened the determination of the citizenry who understood that the government would not only stay for the fight, but that it believed in the concept of "Ukraine" as a whole. Resilience, then, is not only the power of the individual to fight for their values but requires "coherence and synergy between its stakeholders, especially the state and civil society (Teperik et al, 2018: 2)" and can be argued is the outcome of the effect of "liberal governance" that has been implemented during Zelensky's time in office (Zebrowski, 2017: 64). By focusing on the cooperation of the first and second levels of governance, a framework is created whereby resilience can be thought of as a "mode of governance implemented by real people in real time (Rogers, 2017: 13)." Changes are not specifically created post-facto within distant future

but are molded in the moment, as information changes and actions precipitate the need for transpositions to occur.

Another vital part of resilience as a concept is vulnerability. The Realist perspective of IR is that States can never have a sense of security and are therefore inevitably placed in a state of perpetual insecurity, or vulnerability. The very foundation of resilience, or the "underlying ontology of resilience is vulnerability (Evans and Reid, 2017: 331)" for something must first be vulnerable in order to feel threatened. Once threatened, the ability to cope and recover creates the necessity for resilience. The IPCC defines vulnerability as "characteristics of a group and their situation that influence their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist, and recover from the adverse effect of physical events (IPCC, 2012: 32) (Evans and Reid, 2017: 332)". Vulnerability can be viewed through the perspective of either weakness or strength in the face of threats. Weakness will ensure that the traumatic event moves downward into the national psyche and an identity is formed around the inability to adapt. Strength, on the other hand, vindicates an identity and can be regarded as a move from vulnerability to agency wherein the collective is given the opportunity to experience its internal "Self" in their own terms and not be structured externally through a sort of Sartrian "Gaze", or the objectification of oneself through the viewpoint of the other, robbing the Self of its subjective values by imprinting speculative designations (Sartre, 1956). The "Gaze" explains a point when the Self is most vulnerable, as it is no longer under its control. It, prima facie, explains the contested narratives that are placed on the notion of the true Ukrainian identity.

2.3 Collective National Identity

Collective and national identity, used interchangeably, are constructed through patterned recognition of a "Self" within the context of membership within a group, be that people within a society or a nation. The interchangeable use of these terms is used within the framework of CNI [Collective National Identity] proposed by Hall (1999) which purports that collective identity is the force that shapes political institutions and, by virtue, a national identity. CNI, expanded upon by Hjerm (2011), connects to groups, or the collective, in that it "develops the power to influence individual perceptions and attitudes and structural conditions, which is something that individual identity cannot. From an international relations perspective, "national identity is a very useful concept to understand the domestic construction of international politics because it encompasses and is forged by the defining cultural, historical, and political constituents of the state (Siddi, 2020: 5)", much like societal collective identity. National identity is the precursor to the legitimate actions undertaken by

the state. Without creating a national identity, infighting over value systems will ensue while delegitimizing the government and its ability to create policy and react to threats. But national identities are not static. Internal forces present an opportunity for political actors to readjust their values and institutions to "maintain their compatibility with the social construction of their particular collective identity. (Bourbeau, 2017: 28)". External forces, such as War, present a similar opportunity and will be discussed in this thesis.

Collective national identities are constructed over time, regardless of territory denoted by state borders. A nation differs from a state in that nations are not bound by specific territory or sovereign borders. What constitutes a nation is a "shared culture and mutual recognition of belonging to the nation (Siddi, 2020: 6) (Gellner, 1983: 7)" that also confines ethnicities which are "considered pre-cursors of nations (Siddi, 2020: 7)". Ethnicities, while a social construct, exist as the glue that hold a nation together, through common ancestry and traditions, or culture.

The conceptual definition of identity, proposed by Fearon, states that identity is "a social category, defined by membership rules and (alleged) characteristic attributes or expected behaviors, or socially distinguishing features that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential (Fearon, 1999: 2). Identity will hitherto be conceptualized through its criteria of what it is, descriptive and fluid, and what it is not, fixed and definitional (Lange, 2020). Collective identity is relevant because, according to Todd's conceptual analysis, it "allows an explanation of patterns of identity change in terms of wider social processes and resource distribution, while remaining open to the sense and complexity of the individual's experience and the moments of intentionality that arise when individuals face choices as to the direction of change (Todd, 2005: 429)".

This thesis explores the forces, primarily that of War and its effects on collective identity. Exploring changes in identity is necessary because identity is not fluid, but dynamic (Lange, 2020). Identities do not simply create a feeling of change within an individual but also affect the perspectives of the collective, which can then permeate culture, be that societal or national. Changes in identity affect changes in values as groups must reevaluate their previously held beliefs on security. The trauma of losing one's sense of security necessitates a reimagining of group dynamics and the inclusive criteria of the meaning of the group itself.

War, an external force that threatens security, both psychical as well as psychological, causes a blunt traumatic crisis within a collective. Identities are based on shared trust and that trust is

broken when a feeling of insecurity is present. This does not only happen on an individual level, but on a national level as well, as war affects the sovereignty, legitimacy, and agency of a nation to operate. Therefore, "national identities are malleable because they are influenced by…external events and can change over time (Siddi, 2018: 37)". The key component here is the speed at which an identity can change; wherein regarding war, "sudden changes may occur, particularly when historical events force upon the nation a reconsideration of its values and interests (Siddi, 2020:10)". As Hegel argued, "citizens of a state develop a collective identity as a result of conflicts with other states (Hegel, 1999: 15-20) (Siddi, 2020:19)".

Conflicts, or wars in this instance, imprint onto the collective minds through memory. National memory, which lingers in the psyche as trauma, can be "conceptualized as an essential component and driving factor of national identity (Siddi, 2020:10)". During the conflict itself, a threat to the "Self" is perceived in real time and causes a collective or nation to band together to ward off the threat. In itself, conflict does not cause an a priori shift in identity because conflicts do not always attack values, cultures, or their defining characteristics. Conflicts do not necessarily attempt to stifle national consciousness. When a conflict expands to threaten the very meaning of a group identity is when it imprints itself within the memory as trauma and causes a chasm within the "Self". This is the difference between a short-term and long-term change in collective identity. As Anthony D. Smith states, "only remembering the past can a collective memory come into being (Siddi, 2020: 8) (Smith, 1996: 383)".

A binding force for collective identity is shared trauma, experiences, tradition, culture, religion, and language. Language, especially, is necessary to a group to coalesce and differentiate itself from the "Other" which seeks to destroy those commonalities. As Siddi remarks, "language and discourses play an essential role in the construction of national identity and its significant Others (Siddi, 2020:18)" because the eradication of a language displaces culture and merges the Other with the Self.

2.4 Wartime Identity Changes

The focal point of this thesis is whether war changes identity, especially within a short period of time. Identity is not static but is ever-changing though needs to be stimulated to thoroughly have staying power. This stimulation can be internal, but external forces such as war play a vital role in identity changes throughout history. "External forces and events are able to create profound change and can become powerful factors for shaping identities (Henke, 2020:

3),” because they cause the threatened group to securitize their identity via political or civic action.

This thesis argues that the trauma that is caused via war creates the necessary environment for a collective to question their identity and set up the requisite conditions for the change in identity to be sustaining. As Finney states, “modern war necessarily entails ruptures in the fabric of identity on multiple levels since it engenders death and the personal experience by combatants and others of unimaginable horror, the distortion of patterns of everyday life and suspension of normal modes of behaviour, the disruption of social, economic, family and gender relations, and profound political and geopolitical change. (Finney, 2002: 6).” What war creates is a tear in the fabric of identity which must then be resewn with new thread. The disruption of normal daily occurrences creates a period of transition whereby the foundations of identity are expounded upon. At the onset of war, a transition occurs in society and “after a transition, the society, or a subsystem, operates according to new assumptions and rules, thus indicating a range of new practices and not just an altered function (Olsson et al: 2017: 53) (Jerneck and Olsson, 2008: 176)”. War, as an external force, causes a sudden change in the structure of society which, in turn, causes the Self to identify its place within the new cultural order. As assumptions are altered, so are identities since the previous order cannot continue having lost its veil of security.

A top-down approach can be used where elites within society can control a change in identity, especially pertaining to national identity. This is accomplished through laws and regulations that elicit a national response to pride and culture, both of which are attacked during a war with the express intent of extermination. Parts pertaining to culture are language, religion, cuisine, and traditions and by expressly promising to codify these parts into the national narrative and discourse, a speech act occurs (Aradau, 2017: 86) (Arendt, 1958: 237). This speech act, according to the Copenhagen School, is a means of securitizing identity, which is threatened during a War (Stepka, 2022: 19). According to Kaldor, “This is why the intensification of conflict is so important..[as] the significance of the ‘real physical possibility of killing’ is telling. Evidently if you are threatened with death because of a particular identity, that identity becomes more important than any other (Kaldor, 2013: 338).” An identity that is attacked becomes reified within the discourse of the collective and grows stronger as it binds the collective together. In the end, when one is targeted because of the identity, they feel closer to all others containing this identity, regardless of whether they attribute this identity to themselves specifically. If one is attacked for being a Jew, then this

identity defines the person from that moment forward, regardless if they themselves attributed this identity prior to the attack. It becomes the defining characteristic to gain strength in numbers.

This is especially true when the enemy during a War has been a historical "Other". The vulnerability that a society faces in relation to this historical "Other" creates a "truth-event of the vulnerable subject (Evans and Reid, 2017: 335/6)" when an attack takes place. During this truth event, there is a moment of rehashing trauma as a feedback moment where the past ingratiates itself upon the collective. It is a situation whereby memory returns to weigh upon identity once more. The tug of war between the vulnerable subject and warring other creates a "power relation [that] are forms of discourse in which identity is constantly constructed and reconstructed through conflict as well as argument and debate. (Kaldor, 2013: 343)". The takeaway is that war creates a vacuum of trauma due to both the psychical act of war, as well as a war between identities that are attempting to gain power over one another.

One question that arises in discussing War and identity is whether war is the cause of the change or whether the change causes War. Do people go to war because they are different or are those differences created because of war? According to Sen (2006), "unidimensional or solitaristic ethnic, religious or tribal identities are constructed through war and violence or the fear of war and violence rather than, or as well as, being a cause of war and violence. (Kaldor, 2013: 337)." Sen's argument implies that attacking a collective, society, or nation, solidifies their identity. As mentioned above, people do not always consider their identities strongly during peacetime and may only loosely predicate their actions, assumption, and thoughts, upon this identity. However, once this becomes their defining trait, due to the violence of war, this identity is suddenly brought to the forefront and forcibly becomes their defining trait. It becomes embedded in their memory and creates new assumptions about their "Self" and where they fit into society. As that society is then built upon a congregation of similar identities for the purpose of sovereignty, legitimacy, and agency, the effect of this act of war only encourages the strengthening of a collective national identity.

2.5 Link between the Triad of Concepts

Trauma, resilience, and identity are interrelated concepts. While both trauma and identity are sociological concepts, resilience has a political dimension. Trauma, as a process, effectuates an identity of vulnerability and victimization. Trauma is what breaks the organism, whether social or political, to its most vulnerable state. Trauma is the harbinger of the diminished state

of affairs within the individual, the collective, or the state. Trauma is linked to resilience through the process of maintaining, adapting, renewing, and emboldening the organism to resist and strengthen its resolve and to improve upon itself instead of collapse. Hence, trauma is a function that forces the individual into two paths: a disintegrated state or a resilient state. Why do some organism flourish while others flounder? Research by Southwick et al mentions that both genetics and high social support play a role in determining which organism is able to endure their traumatic experience and "bounce back" and improve (Southwick et al, 2016). In the case of Ukraine, resilience came from the solidarity amongst its residents, the interdependence between government and civil society, the unification of previous separated interests, and a functioning government. Genetically, Ukraine has understood its enemy for centuries, and was prepared and willing to defend itself from outside intruders to its sovereignty and territory. Rather than occupying an identity of trauma and victimhood, the confluence of positive social structures, or democratic resiliency, have galvanized Ukrainians signifying a strong identity of resilience, both on the collective national level as well as democratically.

The resilience of Ukrainians manifested through a sense of national value. While the invasion shocked the world as well as the residents of Ukraine, Ukraine was psychologically prepared for the military conquest of their territory. While the attack itself had a surprising effect, Ukrainians did not let their vulnerability and trauma diminish their will to resist. The knowledge of the tactics of a historical occupier and colonizer, coupled with preparation since the start of the War in 2014, meant that Ukraine withstood the trauma of the initial wave of attacks to build up from its trauma in place of surrender.

Here, the interplay between trauma and resilience exists. Psychological preparation to defend the homeland equated to strength in Ukraine's resolve, to not only fight, but succeed in repelling. The decision to not abdicate responsibilities by those in the government and high-ranking military officers further boosted the prospect of resistance. The narrative changed from Ukraine falling within days to Ukraine fighting for European values. While many European countries have shown democratic backsliding, Ukraine has fortified its democracy even during wartime. The ability to restructure trauma and convert it into resilience, both national and democratic, has attached itself to a new form of identity, stripping away the previous victim identity Ukraine had as the little brother of Russia, to one in which Ukraine takes control of its own agency and future, solidifying its difference with its perennial "Other". Of note, the concept of the little brother is relatively new in the discourse between

the two countries. During the 17th and 18th centuries, Ukraine was known as "Little Russia", or original Russia, and not the pejorative "little" used today. Afterwards a movement for a Ukrainian collective national identity began through elites such as Mikhail Grushevsky (Miller, 2022: 101). Over time, however, the larger Russian Empire consumed this discourse and substituted it with the narrative of a single people (Miller, 2022: 95). This persisted until Ukraine emancipated itself from its colonizer and resiliently retook agency over its own identity.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Trauma Theory

This thesis will examine trauma through the framework of Lay Trauma Theory which states that "being traumatized is felt and thought to be an immediate and unreflexive response (Alexander, 2004: 3)", by not only an individual, but primarily a collective. Collectives want to feel secure, not only within the construct of their identity, but also physically. When an event strips them of their opportunity at routine security, they experience trauma. In this sense, trauma occurs because an event, such as War, "interacts with human nature" causing feelings of vulnerability to the collective (Alexander, 2004: 3).

There are two prevailing approaches in Lay Trauma Theory: Enlightenment and Psychoanalytic. For the purpose of this thesis, the Enlightenment approach will be expounded upon. The psychoanalytic approach focuses more on the future trauma of the collective through their feelings and memories about the event. As the War is still ongoing, this thesis will not attempt to speculate how the War may be perceived by Ukrainian youth in the future. The Enlightenment approach, however, focuses on the rational reaction to ongoing trauma, which is more appropriate to the plight of Ukraine. The Enlightenment approach is defined as "rational response to abrupt change (Alexander, 2003: 4)", which a War constitutes. Other defining characteristics include "the objects or events that trigger trauma are perceived clearly by actors, their responses are lucid, and the effects of these responses are problem solving and progressive (Alexander, 2004: 4)". The event, the War itself, is an objective moment that necessitates a military and political response.

In Lay Trauma Theory, collective trauma is created through an "extraordinary event" that creates "disruption" within the fabric of society and leads to "radical change within a short period of time. (Alexander, 2004: 3) (Neal, 1998: 9-10)". As Neal elaborates, it is because "actors are reasonable that traumatic events typically lead to progress: "The very fact that a disruptive event has occurred" means that "new opportunities emerge for innovation and change" (Alexander, 2004: 4) (Neal 1998, 18). This rationality, specifically tied to resilience, is a foundation for the abrupt change to the collective identity of civil society as well as the national identity of political actors who seek to consolidate their legitimacy. This consolidation is done through both political institutions and nation-building; through a set of clearly defined values, that may have been more ambiguous prior to the disruptive event.

3.2 Resilience Theory

Resilience Theory is an approach to vulnerability and adversity. This thesis will explore resilience via Van Breda (2001) who outlines why certain organisms in a socio-ecological environment become stronger after adversity. Typically, vulnerability contributes to negative outcomes, but there are instances where, unlike others in the same situation, the organism adapts, connects to others going through the same adversity, and strengthens its resolve (Masten, 2011).

This thesis will also explore Bourbeau's typology of resilience: the MMR typology. The acronym explores 3 types of resilience: maintenance, which keeps structures in place, marginality, which strengthens structures on the margins, and renewal, where the trauma suffered to vulnerable structures are renewed and improved (Bourbeau, 2017: 29). This further elaborates on the autopoietic approach by Chandler and Coaffee where resilience is a method by the vulnerable to "build back better" and create a positive outcome (Chandler and Coaffee, 2017: 6). A status quo realization for Ukraine would mean being caught in a tug of war scenario between the West and Russia, and War, as a feature which alters identity, would not have the prescriptive altering effect if Ukraine were to only bounce back. The change in its identity necessitates that it takes proactive steps to choose a position, which it's nation-building actors, institutions, and civil society have already indicated will be closer relations to the West and the conditions placed upon them for stronger rule of law and democratic functions.

3.3 Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) explains a number of overlapping issues concerning identity and conflict. The theory analyses the role of self-conception in group membership, group processes, and intergroup relations, as a non-reductionist, interactionist theory (Hogg, 2018: 112). The key feature of the Social Identity Theory is positive group interaction. Social identity theory "addresses the ways that social identities affect people's attitudes and behaviors regarding their ingroup and the outgroup (Leaper, 2011: 362)", which in the case of Ukraine, is the Ukrainian national identity vis a vis their Russian counterparts. Ukraine is a country that is battling to keep its identity alive, while simultaneously building its national identity as well. This requires an extensive look into the "self" rather than the "other" (Abrams, 2001). In place of focusing on the differences between them and their aggressor, the thesis will use the Social Identity Theory to show that Ukrainians are using positive affirmation and redefinition of the in-group, to build resilience and a stronger collective

national identity. Historically, from the viewpoint of the West and Russia, Ukraine was not seen as having its own individual collective national identity, per se, as it was noted in discourse as a vassal of Russia. Even after the fall of the U.S.S.R, Ukraine was commonly considered a buffer between the East and the West and was not viewed as a sovereign state looking out for its own interests by both Russia and the E.U. Ukraine is creating a narrative of positive affirmation and self-image by focusing on the unique aspects of its nation such as language, religion, and values (Abrams, 2001). This "positive self-evaluation as a group member can be achieved by ensuring that the in-group is positively distinctive from the out-group (Abrams, 2001)", which in the case of Ukraine, is now Russia.

3.4 Connecting the Theories

The connection between the 3 types of theories, and thus the justification for this thesis, lies in their connection of outcomes. Lay trauma theory posits that an extraordinary event, such a War, caused a necessity to adapt. This adaptation appeared in Ukrainian resolve wherein society, its identity, and its military have become stronger. Resilience theory notes that certain organisms become stronger when vulnerable, gaining strength in response to adversity and threat. Renewal theory within resilience posits that, instead of bouncing back to a status quo, new institutions are created to displace those previously vulnerable. This is connected to STI by means of a positive outcome and a focus on resilience as a new marker of Ukrainian identity, connecting each other through strength and adaptation instead of victimhood and occupation.

4. Research Question

The purpose of the research is to examine the interplay between trauma, identity and resilience, specifically tied to youth in Ukraine since the start of the full-scale invasion. As noted in the theoretical framework, war is a catalyst for changes in individual, collective, and national identity as it forces a revaluation of one's Self and culture. War is a traumatic experience which leaves a void of stripped identities which are then reimagined into one that includes closer ties to community. That community, in turn, is either inclusive or exclusive. The methods in which identities adapt is a form of resilience that can foster either positive or negative changes.

Therefore, the research question for this thesis is:

How has the War in Ukraine altered the collective or national identity of youth in Ukraine? How has the trauma of the war coalesced the young citizenry into a civic and national milieu and how has this trauma effectuated an identity of resiliency?

This multi-part research question is important in the field of IR as it does not solely focus on current changes but investigates the trajectory of Ukrainian society. If the War has created a national solidarity and made the youth feel more Ukrainian, despite regional differences, then the nation can consolidate around the event and pursue specific national, cultural, and foreign policy strategies that were previously at conflict. A positive identity between Ukrainian youth could create a path towards a stronger civil society that reinforces its commitment to the West, thus expediting the democratization of institutions as well as affirming its dedication to Western ideologies.

Prior to the War, Ukraine was an amalgamation of identities: Ukrainian, Russian, Ukrainian-Russian, Eastern-Slavic, European, and Cosmopolitan. As War has the effect of quickly changing identities, Ukrainians citizens may feel a stronger connection to the Ukrainian identity, thus strengthening the power of the State.

The hypothesis of this thesis is threefold:

> H1: The War in Ukraine has pushed Ukrainian youth towards a more focused sense of Ukrainian-specific identity, across all regions.

> H2: The trauma of the war will positively bring about a change in civic but not ethnic identity.

H3: Ukrainian resilience, undermined at the start of the War, is the catalyst for the change in collective national identity and will broker a sustained push towards nationalizing democratic institutions.

Analysis of the interviews will provide an outlook at the hypotheses and whether the War has in changed the identities and perceptions of the youth, or whether there are other variables that permeate their demographic such as historical trauma which could have the effect of strengthening resolve and resilience and not cause a change in identity per se.

5. Research Puzzle

5.1 The Case of Ukraine

This thesis deals with the specific case study of the War in Ukraine and how it has affected the collective national identities of the Ukrainian youth through the concept of trauma, as well as whether the new identity is a cause or effect of resilience and what that means for Ukraine moving forward. As stated in the conceptualization section, War is a defining motivator for changes in identity through trauma, and in the case of Ukraine specifically, historical trauma embedded in memory. One part of the research of this thesis is to investigate whether historical trauma affects the Ukrainian youth.

Identity in Ukraine can span ethnic, regional, and the civic spectrum. As identity is ever-changing, research is to be conducted into the timeframe and speed of those changes. In a video debate, Taras Kuzio argues: 'conflict and war always changes identity very quickly' (Ukrainian Nationalism, Volhyn 1943, and Decommunization, 2017). In Kuzio's view, conflict is a precipitous force that alters collective identity on a fundamental level. This occurrence is especially rapid in Ukraine because of generational trauma at the hands of its historical "Other": Russia. As relations change between sovereign nations and ethnicities, the view of "Self" changes alongside it. War attempts to strip away differences between civic and ethnic groups, which in turn, causes those groups to focus inward and answer the question of "who are we", when this question may have previously been moot. This is especially true if historical trauma is involved as the latent memory of atrocities committed are brought to the forefront since "how an event is remembered is directly entwined with how it is represented (Carptentier, 2015: 10) (Eyerman, 2004: 71)".

Memory is what constitutes the foundation of an identity in that it is "the core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely a sense of sameness over time and space" and that this sameness can only be "sustained by remembering, and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity (Finney, 2002: 5)". As Henrikson explains, "collected memory—or experienced simultaneously as a group—"collective" memory—the disruption and territorial fracturing that occurred in the Soviet Union in 1991 created a profound, compounding geopolitical trauma (Henrikson, 2020: 13)". That traumatic memory has been reignited with the attempted territorial severance of Crimea in 2014 and Donbas in 2022. Ukraine has historically been a fractured territory, a column of Europe forever battling for its sense of

"Self" between invasions from the Mongols, Ottomans, Prussians, Polish-Lithuanians, and Russians to name a few.

Ukraine has had to pledge fealty to numerous empires as the present territory of Ukraine has been ruled most of history by others meaning that it could not form a independent national identity (Stepanenko, 2003: 110). Due to this exchanging of hands, "a coherent national identity and a well-formulated national agenda are difficult to achieve (Prizel, 1994: 104) (Henke, 2020: 6)," but a concerted effort has been made following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The Russian invasion of Ukraine involved a "re-exposure to a traumatic stimulus (that is, Russian aggression) that was previously also a cause of much distress and fear among the population (during the annexation of Crimea in 2014) (Jawaid et al, 2022: 748)". This distress served as the catalyst for rethinking not only the national agenda, i.e. closer ties to the West, but also as a springboard to a more cohesive collective identity, primarily among the youth. In a survey conducted by Teperik in 2018, "49% of respondents express readiness to contribute to ensuring security within their community (Teperik et al, 2018: 9)" and this number has most likely increased since then with a stronger sense of civic duty amongst the Ukrainian youth who are actively fighting for their agency and identity.

On a national level, and in terms of national identity, the attempt to de-legitimize Ukrainian identity by Russia has caused a backlash, especially amongst Ukrainian youth; having the opposite effect than was intended. Propaganda coming out of Russia elaborated that Ukraine was attempting to deny its identity as part of the Russian world (Russkiy Mir) by realizing its sovereignty as a state (Kuzio, 2022: 44). Policy signifying Ukrainian as the national language, an important aspect of national identity, were seen as a means of distancing itself from its neighbor, or its historical big brother. Language is not the only cultural concept that leads to a strengthening of national identity, however, as "national anthem, embroidery, Ukrainian music and movies, became a magnet for and powerful promoters of national identification (Henke, 2020: 12)."

A question that arises surrounds the forms of Ukrainian identity and how they manifest themselves. As previously stated, having Ukrainian as a national language is one mode, while having a "positive and proud attitude towards Ukraine or the use of national symbols has to be complemented by other elements, such as respect for Ukrainian values, (political) participation and (economic) contribution (Henke, 2020: 10)". These system of values in the national identity will define what the future holds for Ukraine in whether it stays neutral,

veers back towards the Russian World, or moves towards closer ties to the West. A concerted effort this past decade has shown an approach towards the latter. In fact, the country's "nation-building process has become a political project of the State and is seen as a necessity to Ukraine's future integration into the European space (Kosmachev, 2015: 39)," which it is trying to accomplish, much to the dismay of Russia, by forming closer bonds with both NATO and the E.U. As Fiala writes, Ukraine has been "intentionally and increasingly forming a strengthened national identity based on identifying with the West through ever increasing ties with organizations such as NATO and the EU while rejecting Russia (Fiala, 2022)", thus reclaiming its ability to create its own strategic policy and national goals.

The outcome of this renegotiated identity has been showcased in Ukraine taking back its agency from its historical "Other": Russia (Molchanov, 2015). Events such as the Orange Revolution, Revolution of Dignity, and the annexation of Crimea by Russia have "brought a change to ethnonational identities, as people who had felt ambivalent about their national belonging before not only came to feel much more strongly Ukrainian, but also became more active in civil society (Kulyk, 2014: 90) (Henke, 2020: 7)". But while ethnic Ukrainians have felt a closeness, especially the youth, ethnicity is not the defining feature of Ukraine that binds identities together. Civic identity has shown to be the more prevailing attribute. In a survey conducted six months after the onset of the 2022 invasion, "the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians saw themselves as citizens of Ukraine (Goodwin et al, 2023: 2)". This survey showed that being a citizen of Ukraine was a more important factor to Ukrainian identity than being ethnically Ukrainian. A separate survey conducted in 2022 by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology corroborates this sentiment, concluding that "88% of Russian-speaking Ukrainians and 78% of Russian-speaking Russians chose civic identity (Dembitskyi, 2022)".

It is not ethnicity that is the locus for a more cohesive collective identity, but it can be concluded, that for the Ukrainian population, "territory and citizenship are [the] fundamental parts for the further development of a civic identity (Henke, 2020: 10)". As Solchanyk explains, the "Ukrainian nation is defined as a territorial or political concept, not as an ethnic or linguistic category (Solchanyk, 2001: 145)", the traces of which can be found in its Constitution. The Constitution of Ukraine creates a "whole of society approach that underpins national resilience" as it enforces the notion of oneness amongst Ukrainian civil society in that national security is a "matter of concern for all of Ukrainian people (Teperik et al, 2018: 3)". All people must be involved in ensuring the continued existence of the State.

While this has previously not been means tested, it can be concluded that this national identity is, in fact, resilient.

5.2 Resilience in Ukraine

When the invasion began on the 24th of February, 2022, few outside of Ukraine thought that the War would continue past the year mark. The consensus was that Russia would advance through Ukraine in a week's time. This scenario not only proved incorrect, but the determination of the Ukrainian people has shown stronger and more resilient than anticipated, especially amongst the young (Goodwin et al, 2023: 2). Ukraine not only maintained as a State but also launched a counter-offensive that reclaimed much of the territory lost in Russia's initial surge. Due to this success, Ukrainians are not willing to negotiate along current territorial markers, demanding that their full border be restored (Dempsey, 2023). Resilience in Ukraine has proved stronger than anticipated because the trauma that the War has caused is not novel but has been occurring for generations. As Goodwin states, "national resilience during times of trauma is best viewed as a process that includes community factors and the broader physical and social ecology (Goodwin et al, 2023: 1)." As stated earlier, a threat to one's identity causes that identity to strengthen as when an organism is attacked, its level of resilience materializes in a harder shell that protects itself. This biological resilience can also be extrapolated toward sociological resilience. In the case of Ukraine, community, which is viewed through citizenship, has become a unifying feature, regardless of regional differences. Instead of regions fracturing and splintering to match their ethnicity, national identity has consolidated into a more cohesive view of Ukrainian identity. While Russia has sought to portray Ukraine as fragmented in terms of ethnic identity, Ukraine has been resilient in maintaining the core of its identity through "the use of the hryvnia, speaking their language and creating alternative education methods to keep their children away from Russian propaganda (Fiala, 2022)", a marker of sovereignty. The invasion and subsequent War with Russia will hasten the desire to preserve "the cultural and linguistic aspects" of their society which are likely to grow even more resilient and become a significant part of its national identity after the War's conclusion (Fiala, 2022).

The outcome of the unforeseen resilience of the Ukrainian nation can be viewed in their ability to come together to achieve the common military goal of expelling Russian troops from Ukrainian territory. This has transpired due to a "strong and still developing identity [that] has rendered a high degree of resilience in the face of attempted Russian (re-) domination (Fiala, 2022)". Prior to the War, little appreciation was given to the capability of

the Ukrainian army to withstand an attack from their more populous and well-equipped neighbor, but "the high level of resilience of Ukrainians and their determination to be a sovereign nation independent of Russia has meant that there has been much cooperation by citizens with their military and security services which translates to a very large auxiliary capability (Fiala, 2022)". The ability to unite under a new national identity, one not formulated even in 2014 when Crimea was annexed, has allowed Ukraine to not only mollify the Russian offensive, but to counter it as well. One of definitions for resilience in Ukraine has been implementing a state system for critical infrastructure protection (Bondarenko et al, 2021: 89)". Success in infrastructure is attributed to national elites as much as to civil society, whose unified relationship has aided in obstructing strategic decision-making. As citizenship has been the basis for Ukrainian identity, dividing lines amongst regions has slowly started to disappear which has made it easier to protect not only the territory but the infrastructure as well, in part due to social cohesion. The effect of which allows Ukraine to continue to maintain the use of its vital infrastructure, such as transportation, telecommunication, and utilities during most of the past year.

5.3 Ukraine and Historical Trauma vis a vis Russia

Occupying the corridor between East and West, Ukraine has historically been conquered territory. In Ukrainian discourse and traumatic memory, no empire or nation has the conceptual identification of "Enemy" comparable to Russia. Consequently, "war is necessary to construct a friend–enemy distinction as a basis for sovereignty (Kaldor, 2013: 337)", of which the crux of Ukraine's dedication to its affirmation as an independent state. Without clearly defined distinctions and differences between nations, a state is unable to maintain its conceptual sovereignty.

Current discourse in Ukraine views Russia as an occupier which has forcefully implemented programs to rid Ukraine of its language, history, and culture, which Ukraine views as distinct to that of its neighbor. This harkens back to historical notion of the Kieven Rus, of which both Ukrainians and Russians are descendants of (Kuzio, 2001: 31). Russia proclaims that the oneness between Ukraine and Russia was codified in the Pereyaslav Treaty in 1654, when Ukraine gave fealty to the Russian Czar for protection against the occupying Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Kuzio, 2001: 32). Russia asserts that this treaty remains a sign of friendship and solidarity amongst the Ukrainians and Russians, but Ukrainians contend that it has been used in Russian historical discourse to subjugate Ukrainians. Ukrainians point to atrocities committed against them by their neighbor such as the Holodomor genocide in 1933

and the attempted eradication of Ukrainian language and culture during the U.S.S.R as proof that the relationship between the two nations has never been mutualistic, as Russia claims, but one of power and suppression. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 gave Ukraine the chance at legitimate agency in creating its own national identity, away from its historical oppressor. The trauma that has been imprinted on the Ukrainian collective is what Solynchuk describes as Pereyaslav complex whereby "Ukrainians, based on their historical experience with Russians, are suspicious of their motives and see Russia as the main threat to Ukraine's independence (Solchanyk, 2001: 11)". Ukraine's second president, Leonid Kuchma, expanded on the thought that Ukrainian independence is anathema to Russia by saying that 'In Russia, they pretend that Ukraine as a sovereign, independent state does not exist' (Solchanyk, 2001: 11).

Treaties from the past, such as Article 6 of the Declaration of State Sovereignty signed in 1990 (Solchanyk, 2001: 35) and the 1997 Friendship Treaty that established an agreement on the inviolability of Ukrainian territory and sovereignty (Solchanyk, 2001: 79), can be inferred as appeasement rather than a good faith covenant. The revisionism that Russia uses further provides the basis for Ukraine's distrust, as it is based on repeated historical events. From Russia's perspective, Ukrainian sovereignty isn't an issue of territory, but one of culture. Russia has always viewed Ukrainians as similar, whose inception is stated as fact in history, and which have always been bound to one another. What the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity have shown, is that Ukraine has sought to distance itself from its family, as a sort of black sheep, by attempting to secure closer ties with the liberal West, the antithesis of Russian values, and by extent, purported Ukrainian values.

For Russia, this could be explained through the concept of "divorce syndrome" whereby an agent suddenly wishes to dispose of their long-time partner (Solchanyk, 2001: 11). Ukraine, in Russian discourse, has been connected to Russia from the time of the Kievan Rus at the earliest and the Pereyaslav Treaty at the latest, spanning at minimum almost 4 centuries. When Ukraine "initiated divorce proceeding not just from the USSR [in 1990], but what Russians perceived to be "Russia" (Solchanyk, 2001: 13), this caused a cognitive dissonance of its own perceived national collective identity and its place amongst its former sphere of influence. Following the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine's first president, Leonid Kravchuk, signaled his intent to move away from Russian hegemony in the region, to move away from a sort of Russian Monroe Doctrine (Solchanyk, 2001: 68). This newly generated collective

national identity, and the suddenness of the divorce proceedings created by historical trauma and distrust, forged a path to eventual conflict.

6. Methodology: Research Design

6.1 Qualitative Approach

The research design of this study is based on a qualitative approach, primarily utilizing interviewing as the primary method. Surveys were not considered suitable as they could prove too informal and fail to provide in-depth accounts of the reasons behind identity changes. Discourse analysis, as well as literary and content analysis, were excluded due to their nature as second-hand accounts. The chosen approach, interviewing, offers first-hand detailed accounts directly from the targeted demographic: Ukrainian nationals aged 18-30, residing in four distinct regions of Ukraine: West, Center, South, and East.

This research adopted empathetic neutrality and mindfulness as its core approach. Given the emotive and ongoing nature of the subject, participants were anticipated to display a range of emotions during the discussion. Discussing trauma can be challenging, necessitating empathetic neutrality from the interviewer to maintain validity while fostering a comforting environment conducive to trust-building, especially considering the interviewer's status as an outsider (Patton, 2015: 46).

The use of interviews as the primary qualitative method facilitated the customization of questions and the exploration of the specific nature of potential identity changes. This study hypothesized that the war prompted a broad reconfiguration of the collective national identity of Ukrainians—an identity that has been dormant and co-opted, but is now capable of being reinterpreted and reproduced by a multitude of social actors, such as civilians, displaced individuals, officials, and activists. This reconfiguration can be seen as a response to trauma that spurs a group to bond over a shared experience. However, the sentiments of participants prior to the war remained unclear, paving the way for the application of the "inductive-deductive logic process (Creswell, 2013: 45)"—a blend of deductive logic through theory, coupled with inductive elements as the interviewer observes and analyzes empirical data to discern changes attributable to the war.

The semi-structured interview technique was chosen for this study. A fully structured interview would be too formal for non-expert participants and might inhibit trust-building between the interviewer and interviewees. Semi-structured interviews enable the dismissal

and addition of questions in real time, depending on the direction of the interview. Blee and Taylor argue that "the open-ended nature of such interviewing strategies makes it possible for respondents to generate, challenge, clarify, elaborate, or recontextualize understanding (Blee and Taylor, 2002: 94)", thus facilitating a grounded understanding of identity transformation (Schaffer, 2016: 22). An informal structure was deemed inappropriate due to its lack of organization and given the larger than average sample size, a semi-structured interview approach would facilitate the extraction of a greater number of data points. The semi-structured format is beneficial in this context, as it allows for the formulation of follow-up questions based on the respondents' answers. Upon completion of the interviews, the data will be collated and scanned for similarities and differences to ensure a valid analysis of the research question.

6.2 Sampling

Interviews were conducted both in-person and through online platforms such as Zoom. Direct, face-to-face interviews were conducted in Ukrainian cities that were accessible to the author, including Chernigiv, Kyiv, and Lyiv. Individuals residing in other locations, principally Odessa and Kharkiv, were interviewed remotely due to a combination of safety concerns and time constraints. Participants were sourced via personal contacts or through liaisons within university staff.

Owing to logistical impediments, focus groups were not utilized. The complexity of coordinating the schedules of 4-5 respondents for online meetings posed a significant challenge. Moreover, the delicate nature of the subjects being discussed – personal identity, trauma, and attitudes towards Russia – suggested that a group dynamic might potentially dilute or inhibit honest responses. It was thus deemed more appropriate to engage respondents in one-on-one interviews, with the expectation that this format would engender a higher degree of comfort and candor.

Sampling posed certain challenges, notably the limitation in the number of potential respondents that could feasibly be reached. Moreover, the sensitive nature of the topics under discussion presented a further barrier to recruitment, with the possibility that abbreviated responses could undermine the validity of the research. Geographical representation was also a concern, with the need to avoid over-representation from a single region in order to ensure that the research question was addressed in a balanced manner.

A total of 14 respondents were interviewed over a two-week period during which the author was physically present in Ukraine. This fieldwork approach offered the dual advantages of fostering trust and rapport with respondents and providing first-hand exposure to the ongoing impacts of the War on daily life in Ukraine, including manifestations of resilience within the population.

The country was conceptually divided into four regions for the purposes of this research: West, Center, South, and East. This regional delineation was informed by existing research and an understanding of Ukraine's historical and cultural contexts. Western Ukraine, bordering Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary, has historical ties to Poland and is known for its strong adherence to Ukrainian language and culture, arguably due to its geographical distance from Russia. Central Ukraine, wherein the capital, Kyiv, is situated, constitutes the administrative heart of the country. Eastern and Southern Ukraine, recognized for their higher density of Russian speakers, are perceived to be under greater Russian influence. Southern Ukraine lies along the Black Sea, while Eastern Ukraine, particularly the Donbas and Kharkiv oblasts, shares a border with Russia and has been subject to more intensive Russification during the Soviet era.

Interviews were conducted with citizens from all four regions, although some were not residing in their region of origin at the time of the research. Despite this, these individuals were still Ukrainian nationals currently residing within Ukraine. For instance, a respondent originally from Kharkiv in the Eastern region had been displaced to Lviv in the Western region for several months. This situation enriched the respondent's perspective on regional contrasts and contributed to their understanding of Ukrainian unity.

The following is a breakdown of the number of respondents per region:

Western Ukraine: 2

Central Ukraine: 5

Southern Ukraine: 4

Eastern Ukraine: 3

Figure 1: Regional Map of Ukraine

A total of 14 respondents were interviewed. The study sought to include 3-5 respondents from each region, but only two respondents from Western Ukraine were located. These individuals were from Lviv and Lutsk. Despite falling short of the target, it was deemed that this discrepancy was unlikely to impact the research findings significantly. The rationale was that Western Ukraine, known for its resolute adherence to Ukrainian culture and traditions, was less likely to exhibit shifts in identity, thereby mitigating the impact of this regional under-representation on the overall research question.

The cohort of respondents ranged in age from 19 to 30, aligning with the author's targeted demographic of 18-30 years old. The rationale for this particular age range was devised upon two primary considerations. Firstly, these respondents would have been born post-Soviet Union, indicating their socialization occurred during an era of Ukrainian independence. Secondly, as part of the emerging active civil society, they are poised to significantly influence the nation-building processes Ukraine will inevitably embark upon following the cessation of the War. The resilience and choices of this younger generation will be pivotal in determining whether Ukraine sustains its independence, gravitates towards a more Eurocentric trajectory, or realigns itself within the Russkiy Mir. Given that the development of a national strategy predicated on a shared collective national identity requires substantial time to manifest, this age group is expected to play a leading role in steering Ukraine's future path.

The socioeconomic status of the respondents was not a specific sampling criterion, leading to a randomized representation. However, the nature of the sampling connections, coupled with the targeted age range, meant that the respondents were predominantly students or employed within the service sector. It should be noted that no respondents who lacked at least one year of university experience were included in the study. A majority of the respondents identified as female (8:6), though this slight gender imbalance is not anticipated to significantly impact the validity of the data. Respondents' occupations spanned a range of industries and roles, from students, gym trainers, online marketers, singers, DJs, software developers, and coroners.

The study also engaged Russian-Ukrainians, in addition to ethnic Ukrainians, to explore whether the war has catalyzed a shift in their identity, potentially diminishing their Russian identification and bolstering their Ukrainian identity.

6.3 Technical Analysis

This study employed a combination of interviewing and thematic analysis to construct a conceptual framework for understanding identity as a mutable signifier over time. Thematic analysis proved particularly advantageous as it facilitated the coding process, allowing for the categorization of responses relating to the central themes of trauma, identity, and resilience. As Maguire and Delahunt articulate, "the goal of a thematic analysis is to identify themes, i.e., patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017: 3353)". Respondents' answers were systematically parsed by theme, subsequently grouped into responses that addressed the research question and outliers.

Content analysis was deemed unnecessary, given the study's focus did not extend to media coverage. Similarly, surveying was not utilized, as it was recognized that the complexity and nuance of individual feelings and perceptions of change could not be adequately captured through multiple-choice questions. Ethnography as a method was dismissed due to the challenge of observing identity change directly. The symbolism of wearing blue and yellow insignia, for example, would not necessarily signify a substantive shift in identity. Process tracing was also deemed unsuitable as it is typically applied to uncover causal relationships, whereas the potential catalyst for changes in Ukrainian identity – the War – was already established.

6.4 Validity and Reliability:

Given that all information was derived directly from primary sources, the validity and reliability of the data are substantial; however, a potential limitation may arise from the level of trust between the interviewer and the respondents. Should the respondents harbor reservations or mistrust, they may not be entirely candid in their responses. A potential validity issue emerges from the research question's temporal element. Since the War is ongoing, the respondents' recollections of their sentiments towards Russia prior to the War may be biased. Given the deeply personal nature of the research, establishing a rapport with the interviewee was paramount. Without fostering trust, the responses might not be as candid or insightful, thus compromising the validity of the research. This trust was established through networking, leveraging known associates or personal connections, and employing a semi-structured interviewing style conducive to building rapport (Leech, 2002: 665).

The respondents were provided with either a hard copy or a digital informed consent form to sign, assuring them that the data collected during the interview - be it Dictaphone recordings or notes - would be utilized solely for the purpose of the research and subsequently erased or discarded upon completion of the thesis. The respondents had the option of participating in a face-to-face interview, where a Dictaphone was employed, or a virtual interview via Zoom. A total of 5 interviews were conducted in person, while the remaining 9 were carried out online, either due to logistical constraints preventing the author from traveling to the respondent's location or scheduling conflicts. Following the interviews, the data was transcribed by software, either in English or Ukrainian, contingent on the language used during the interview.

The reliability of the data might be slightly compromised due to the necessity for translation in three interviews. Given the author's limited proficiency in Ukrainian, a translator was enlisted to assist. While the core substance of the questions and responses is believed to have been preserved, the richness of the data gathered from these three interviews was potentially impaired by the difficulties in asking follow-up questions and the potential for personal interpretation on the part of the translator. One of the interviews was accomplished online, with the translator being on the call if necessary but not used. The other 2 interviews were done in a place of residence with the author facing the respondents with the translator in the periphery so as not to contaminate the connection process. The translator was used sparingly to assist in translating questions asked to the respondents but did not aid in relaying the answers to the author. The author's rudimentary understanding of Ukrainian, combined with

non-verbal communication cues, facilitated an understanding of the context of the responses and enabled the formulation of follow-up questions. By opting to respond in their native tongue, the respondents were able to provide more nuanced and in-depth responses, thereby enhancing the trust and reliability of their contributions. The reliability of the responses was further bolstered by respondent subjectivation (Jansen, 2013: 33), achieved through the variation of questions pertaining to their regional traits, history, and connections to Ukraine. Recognizing the respondents as active participants in the unfolding events and discourse, replete with emotions, personal anecdotes, and first-hand experiences, rather than merely passive victims, elicited more authentic responses, thereby enhancing the reliability of their answers.

7. Analysis of Interview Data

This section will analyze the empirical data received via the conducted interviews. By way of thematic analysis, the data has been divided into 6 themes, all prevalent in the respondent's answers to the interview questions and dealing directly with the triad of concepts mentioned earlier.

7.1 Trauma as a Unifier through Resilience

This master's thesis aims to explore the interplay between war trauma and resilience in the context of Ukraine, offering a collaborative paradigm that sheds light on the relationship between these two constructs. While academic research on this particular topic remains limited, this study seeks to fill the gap by examining the collective national identity of Ukraine and its evolving dynamics, particularly in relation to Russian influence. The investigation delves into whether the emerging identity is rooted in a stronger sense of Ukrainian nationalism or primarily driven by anti-Russian sentiments. This aspect will be discussed in detail in a subsequent section.

The research findings indicate that the unity observed among the Ukrainian populace can be attributed primarily to the shared experiences of trauma endured during the full-scale invasion. In contrast to previous events, the extensive conflict impacted all inhabitants across the nation, leaving no region untouched by the effects of shelling or the displacement of people. As individuals from the affected Eastern and Southern regions sought refuge in the West, they were afforded opportunities to engage with others and engage in meaningful discussions regarding their apparent differences. Moreover, the advent of social media served as a unifying tool, enabling the younger generation to challenge preconceived notions about supposed dissimilarities among themselves. As stated by a few respondents:

> *"That's why we are more united than the previous times. Especially we have been united in the beginning of the war, the first days, first weeks, because everyone have been in the same, under the same sky with the Russian rockets. And everyone have been shocked. (Nick)"*

> *"After the full-scale invasion, I felt enormous unity of Ukrainian people. Like in a way I can't even express. So it was as if we were all connected by some kind of web like connected each Ukrainian, from the head of state to the most common person. (Svitlana)"*

> *"After the start of the full-scale war, Ukraine really became a complete nation, maybe it is quite scary to say about, but all the things that happens in our country unites us. You do not talk with people, but you know what unites you with them. This feeling was impossible to feel before the war (Zoriana)"*

As Nick stated above, the War, through the trauma it elucidated by way of rockets and shellshock, resulted in a unison that previously was not prevalent. This unity was not only visible in the interconnection, or web, of Ukrainian citizens, but in their inherent sameness. Consequently, it is this feeling of sameness that derived the opportunity for resilience.

Within the context of this master's thesis, a significant point of contention among the study's respondents emerged, concerning the regional disparities in Ukrainian identity prior to 2022. It is widely acknowledged in scholarly discourse that the western regions of Ukraine, situated west of the Dnipro River, are closely associated with Ukrainian culture, while the eastern regions have historically exhibited stronger ties to Russian culture. The accuracy of this discourse and its impact on the unity of Ukraine formed the crux of the disagreement among the respondents. Although a consensus was reached regarding the overall increase in unity within Ukraine, half of the respondents acknowledged the presence of inherent differences that may persist, while the other half viewed these differences as deliberate Russian propaganda aimed at dividing and antagonizing Ukrainians.

> *"I personally don't like this division on geographical parts of Ukraine, which is quite popular with Russians, who say, Oh, there's Western Ukraine, which is completely different to the rest of Ukraine, and which tries to impose its values on the rest. (Mariia)"*

The importance of this difference will show itself in the post-war nation building that Ukraine will need to go through. If Ukraine was unified prior to the War, then the process of consolidating the nation will be smoother than if there were deep regional differences in identity prior to 2022. An argument can be made that Ukraine was already relatively unified prior to the invasion when controlling for the success of its state of democratic resiliency. While these differences do exist, Kulyk notes that a "bottom-up de-Russification process since the military conflict with Russia, while highlighting that a broad regional divide still exists even if the main dividing line in Ukraine 'has shifted eastward'" (Kulyk, 2016: 607) (Barrington, 2022: 361). A few respondents noted that there will need to be a focus on reconstruction of the Eastern and Southern region of Ukraine, not just materially, but also

psychologically. They view Ukraine as a divided country where Russian culture still permeates these two regions, and an effort will need to be made to integrate constituents into a new Ukraine with its new collective national identity. However, they are hopeful that this process will succeed and that the trauma that all Ukrainians experienced at the hands of Russia will, while disconnecting them from their neighbor, serve as a bridge that unifies them further. While many people in the East and the South may have been sympathetic towards Russia prior to 2022, this is no longer the case, as Russia has threatened their lives and Ukrainians have rushed to give aid and assistance.

The youth, especially, have noted that they rarely saw these differences that Russian propaganda has sought to highlight.

> *"Because it was imposed by society, that the Ukrainian language is some kind of salt, rural language. This village and you were not fashionable. And the Russian language was directly imposed on us from childhood. (Alina)"*

Respondents stated they read about the antagonism towards the Russian language in the Eastern and Southern regions via government reforms promoting the Ukrainian language but have not witnessed any acrimony or discriminatory behavior to the Russian language being used.

Prior to 2022, Russian culture, media, business, politics, and trade, all influenced Ukraine to a degree. As previously stated, many of the respondents listened to Russian music and consumed Russian media prior to the War. This came to an end, with Ukrainian artists and musicians dominating Ukrainian charts, now given the chance to express their own voices. Ukrainian-made music now takes up 95 out of the top 100 places on the charts. This outcome stems from respondent's viewing Russian artists as interlocuter's of the Russian State, thereby someone who takes part in their trauma. Having excised the creative mechanism of Russian influence, respondents hope that the War will speed up the process of evicting Russian corporate influence on their country.

> *"In a way that we are getting a chance to be rebuilt. It just sped up in a way. It's, like forced. Maybe we just, maybe our previous path was too slow. (Svitlana)"*

Respondents see corruption as a major impediment to social, political, and economic progress and a pox on Ukrainian society. Corruption, in their view, is the primary obstacle to a more independent Ukraine, as it is an example of foreign interest, making it a detriment to

Ukraine's own interests and sovereignty. An interesting note is that the majority of respondents feel that corruption within their government is primarily caused by Russian interest. Expelling Russian business from Ukraine and politicians that back Russian interests from the Verkhovna Rada, or the Ukrainian Parliament, is seen as a step toward a freer and more independent Ukraine. In some ways, a positive outcome of the War, to some respondents, was that it allowed for a reorganization of Ukrainian institutions and a greater focus on Ukrainian sovereignty. To many respondents, Ukraine is not only more territorially united between the regions, but also politically united in its institutions, thus consolidating its collective national identity and blazing a path forward as a progressing nation.

> *"The first two months of the war made me feel that finally, now we are a complete nation that can deal with the problems of each other and can live with various attitudes towards the life and towards the culture and language problem. That we can all live together in peace and prosper. (Yan)"*

> *"We like unified in idea not to just to fight with Russian these enemies, but to become better. It, it's like a huge work that we didn't do before (Kseniya)"*

Because Ukraine now has a stronger collective national identity, respondents are optimistic that this new identity will be the foundation of a more cohesive and prosperous nation, without prior perceived divisions. Being a '*complete nation*' (Yan) is developed from the resilient attitudes of the Ukrainian people. From the youth's perspective, the War has accelerated a change for a more harmonious understanding of all residents of Ukraine.

> *"This is new for the country, which is only now finally able to shake off past narratives imposed upon it. (Kseniya)"*

To further corroborate this newfound unified identity, an excerpt from an interview conducted in 2022 by the Berghof Foundation states that "Right after the war started, I felt myself drawn into feeling 100% Ukrainian. I felt the desire to stand up and fight for our independence. There is no doubt anymore about whether we are Ukrainians or not. We all are. Our identity has manifested itself and blossomed. (Levchenko, 2022)". This lack of doubt emanates from a positive social cohesion as a direct result of the trauma caused by the invasion. The invasion presented Ukraine with the impetus to negotiate its identity through trauma and emerge with resilient collective national identity.

This form of identity, that centers on a united Ukraine, takes shape in the state and people's resilient nature, which will manifest itself during the post-war reconciliation and rebuilding process. A unified Ukraine, one that votes for national instead of regional goals will become more restitute in its democratic resiliency. This change in identification has been steadily occurring since the early 2000's, according to the NASU Institute of Sociology, when regional (38%) and national identity (41%) were almost equal (Averianova et al, 2022: 59). A study conducted by Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in July 2022 showed that national identity has grown to 85%, with the majority of all ethnic groups identifying as Ukrainian first and foremost (Ukrinform, 2022). This has been further exemplified by findings from Kulyk and Hale, citing that "millions of Ukrainians—including those of Russian origin and/or speaking primarily Russian in everyday life—responded to what they viewed as foreign aggression by stronger attachment to Ukraine and stronger alienation from Russia (Kulyk and Hale, 2021: 847)."

7.2 Trauma as a Disconnector of Neighbors

The full-scale invasion from Russia on the 24th of February 2022 caused a traumatic break between former neighbors whose relationship could be categorized as either friendly, indifferent, or acrimonious depending on the region. While past historical events such as deportation to Gulags, Holodomor, and the expulsion of Ukrainian language and traditions from the U.S.S.R, have been passed along as a memory device to warn of the dangers of Russia, the relationship was never severed completely. The outcome of a past relationship with Russia is that the historical memory of belonging to the Soviet Union and its legacy has ceased to be just a register of events and figures that act as markers of "us-them" (Levchenko, 2022), but a deep reconstitution of remembrance and reconciliation of the cultural trauma that took place, acting as a disconnector of the two cultures. According to Alexander, "Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity believe they have been subjected to horrendous events that leave indelible marks on their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. (Alexander, 2004: 1) (Klvanova, 2018: 139)." Ukrainians, especially the youth who had not lived through these events did not show animosity towards Russia or Russians prior to the full-scale invasion.

"Living in history and reading history is a big difference. (Zoriana)"

The annexation of Crimea did not, in fact, change these feelings for the majority of Ukrainians or the majority of those interviewed. The general feeling towards Russia after the annexation of Crimea edged along indifferent or cautious, but not vengeful, enraged, or filled with vitriol. The consensus, outside perhaps the western region of Ukraine, which has always maintained its distance from Russian culture, was that the benefits of interaction with Russia still outweighed the costs.

This changed following the full-scale invasion specifically. The difference in events stems from the wholesale attack on the country. Ukrainian trauma of the full-scale invasion comes from their belief that the invasion serves as an eradication of their country, their identity, and their being. The early hours of the invasion reinforced previous historical trauma that the youth never experienced.

> *"During 72 hours, we, for the first time we counted hours and for 72 hours. I spent time at my home feeling nothing, really nothing (Kseniya)"*

Respondents felt as though Russia was attempting to erase them, and the scars of events such as Holodomor, which have never been fully reconciled, have reappeared. While Crimea was seen as an attack on territorial integrity, which angered many Ukrainians, and consolidated their belief in Russia as an aggressor, it was not seen as an affront to their Ukrainian identity. There is a stark difference in the discourse between 'Crimea has always been a part of Russia' and 'Ukrainians and Russians are the same' where the latter is an attack on identity and the former is political. As Ukraine is a new country, something the respondents have spoken of as well, it is in the early stages of forming its collective national identity.

The direct attack by Russia is what caused the trauma to reapply itself, as it was latent while being passed down through the generations. This has, in turn, spurred a reconstitution and renegotiation of their collective national identity. War is the main catalyst of Ukrainians renegotiation as the "vicissitudes of struggle with an array of enemies always play an important role in the formation of nationalism (Wong, 2001: 188) (Barrington, 2022: 365)", and nationalism unifies the citizens of a country to fight for a common purpose. Russia, to Ukrainians always dominates from a position of power, with Ukraine occupying the position of weakness. This trauma of bullying and occupation resulted in a victim mentality for many Ukrainians, which was a part of its identity for centuries.

> *"Show a lot of people you remind recall to your memory what, who you are, where are you from, what your language (Liora)"*

> *"We can survive in everything. It's not about my personal trauma. It's trauma of previous generation. We can survive and we can rebuild everything we can (Kseniya)"*

> *"Then after 2022, I started to ask. Please tell me again because I want to know, and they, and they not even forgot about this. They try to erase that in their memory (Kseniya)"*

Kseniya's quote is an example of the reclamation of family history that was spurred by the War. The trauma of the War caused Ukrainians to re-remember their family histories which, in effect, meant that they "were becoming Ukrainian" (Arel, 2018: 187).

While previously, Ukraine had a closer relationship with Russia, both being a part of the U.S.S.R, the youth, those who were born after dissolution of the Soviet Union, only have the experience of an independent Ukraine. While there had been tensions with Russia in the previous 31 years since the Soviet Union fell, such as the Orange Revolution, these differences were political, not personal to respondents. The full-scale invasion changed the identity of Ukrainians because the trauma of a personal, physical attack was not just one on territory, but on their being, identity, and psyche.

> *"I experienced all this myself. I felt the war on me. I have a small child. I ran away from the Russian rockets into the cellar. I sat there, I said goodbye to life. I wrote death notes to my parents there, and next to me is the house where I was sitting. And I have a house. By the way, the photo is a video, and two projectiles flew into it, and people near me died two meters away. And at that moment, all I thought about was what I hadn't done in my life. Why didn't I do this and why was I somehow connected with this country? That is, these questions challenge me. Well, that's the way it is, because I can't even put into words my hatred for this country. (Alina)"*

The War was not something that was off in a distant part of Ukraine, but at their own doorstep, affecting their lives and their families, and causing many to be displaced.

> *"How does it work? I can't understand this and where in my country, like big war more than one year and it's tough to understand. I still have the moment when I just sit it and how can it be possible?" (Kate)*

Pictures of neighbors and friends under rubble and the fear and dread felt while waking up to the sound of air alarms and the destruction by rockets left a lasting impression and trauma

that forced the psyche of many Ukrainian citizens to rethink not only their feelings towards their neighbor but their collective national identity as well. As the war is still ongoing, time to reconcile this trauma is unavailable, so it manifests itself into a stronger national identity.

> *"And such anxiety to stay awake at night, just chatting with friends there. Everything is okay with them. I was in such a very emotional state. Now it has become relatively calmer, just a lot of work has been added and you understand that the more you work, the more you can afford in the country and the more you will be able to convey the fact that now actually a lot of people support meetings, make meetings on Instagram, volunteers , artists and people in which in the community they all collect funds little by little, buy cars or some kind of aid there and send them to the front. (Sasha)"*

When one group is trying to annihilate a group for what they identify as, the group has the opportunity to show its resilience. Trauma, for Ukrainians, invariably accounted for the proliferation of an identity based upon resilience. While prior to the invasion, Ukrainians were friendly or ambivalent towards Russia, even speaking the language, speaking to Russian people, and listening to Russian music, this changed as the trauma suffered has labeled Russia as the abuser.

> *"For me, the people are the face of power. It was not the government that started this war between our countries. These are the people themselves, and I see how they hate us, how they cannot come to terms with the fact that we live better than them. And I do not divide the type. I believe that the face of government is the people. Therefore, for me, politics and the people are related things. (Alina)"*

> *"When you always have problems with your sleep, because you can hear all of this, they just living their normal life. They have everything that they want. They cannot feel all this. That's why they cannot understand us (Nick)"*

Lay trauma theory states that collectives want to feel secure in both their surroundings, physical state, and in their identity, or psychological state. The full-scale invasion, moreso than the events in 2014, have made the people of Ukraine feel vulnerable. This vulnerability, coupled with historical indignations perpetuated by Russia, has caused a traumatic disconnection in the relationship between Ukraine and Russia. The trauma experienced is not individual, and not momentary, but one that has affected the collective national identity of Ukrainians and forced them to restructure their feelings and views of their abuser. Prior to

2022, the feelings of insecurity and vulnerability were not at the forefront as the essence of Ukrainian identity was not under attack, but since then, Ukrainians have felt as though there is a direct affront to their being, with physical attacks affecting their lives and livelihoods. That fear of death has caused the collective to reconfigure their identity as one which maintained alongside the Russian threat to one that has experienced direct Russian antagonism and memorialized it. On top of an attack on their identity, Ukrainians are "also experiencing agonizing feelings of injustice and unfairness as their hard-earned democracy and freedom are being unjustifiably threatened (Javanbakht, 2022)." This, according to lay trauma theory, manifests itself in acrimony towards the other side.

> *"Someone broke your heart and you can't do it anymore, so I hate Russians. It's not hate, it's more, it's like a big pain. Russia, it's a big black spot on the earth. And I don't want to see anybody from Russia. I don't want to speak with Russians. (Kate)"*

While prior to 2022, many Ukrainians continued to live parallel to Russian influences within their daily lives without feeling the need for change to that structure, the trauma emanating from fear has had the effect of restructuring the collective national identity of the Ukrainian people as a whole.

> *"It was like an opportunity to build a new identity, like to get back to our understanding who we are (Kseniya)"*

> *"Our culture was killed. Now we just trying any ways, any steps to recall it. (Liora)"*

As many of the respondents suggested, this memory will last with the Ukrainian people for generations and is not just a temporary reaction.

> *"The memory will be there for a while. And we I think a lot of Ukrainians, the majority of Ukrainians will teach their future kids to hate right? (David)"*

Children are moving away from the Russian language and learning to communicate with their family and friends in Ukrainian, even if they are ethnically Russian. Ukrainians have stopped listening to Russian music, watching Russian media, and reading Russian books. There is a push to extricate Russian influence from the country, which will affect the nation-building process and methods of resilience once the war has concluded.

7.3 Ukrainian Identity: Changes due to the Full-Scale Invasion

As mentioned in the conceptual framework section, War is a signifier for changes in identity. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022 served as a catalyst for changes to the Ukrainian collective national identity and "Russian aggression has in fact led to a strengthening of the Ukrainian political nation. (Bekeshkina, 2017) (Averianova, 2020: 58)". Though the War began in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and occupation of lands in the Donbas region, this event did not spur significant changes to Ukrainian youth identity, unlike the 2022 invasion, according to the respondents of the interviews. The primary reason, for this cohort specifically, is twofold: the events of 2014 happened at a distance from the majority of the respondents, meaning that physical trauma was not prevalent, and the majority of the respondents were teenagers at the time of the attack, meaning their collective national identity was still being developed.

As the initial War in 2014 occurred relatively far from the main cities of Ukraine, many respondents did not feel as connected to the events transpiring. They also noted that due to this distance, it did not cause a sense of existential vulnerability to their lives and psyche, a necessity in changing collective national identity. The major difference is that respondents felt that the 2014 occupation was a geopolitical threat centered around territory, while the 2022 invasion was an attempt to eradicate the Ukrainian identity causing everyone to coalesce through trauma. In effect, this action caused Ukrainians to focus on a united identity.

> *"It happened only with the beginning of a full-scale invasion, that is, from the twenty-fourth of February of the twenty-second year, when the attack directly occurred, when I felt it myself. Everything will never be like it was before, there will never be this intertwining of our people with their people. (Alina)"*

An act of aggression towards land is a political issue, but one that attempts to eradicate identity, culture, and history of an entire peoples is both political and sociological. Prior to 2022, respondents felt it was unnecessary to focus on their identity because it wasn't under attack, but the event that started on February 24, 2022 caused Ukrainians to reevaluate what it means to be Ukrainian. This outcome is irrespective of region, as a study by Sasse and Lackner found that "nearly a quarter of the population in Ukraine-controlled Donbas, and more than a third among Donbas refugees in Ukraine, identify more as Ukrainian citizens than before (Sasse and Lackner, 2018: 144) (Arel, 2018: 187)", with respondent's answers from the Donbas showing that this number has grown since the full-scale invasion.

Due to the distance and threat level of the 2014 events, many of the respondents stated that they did not feel the need to think about both their identity and their feelings towards Russia. The majority of respondents continued to speak Russian, listen to Russian music, read Russian authors, and converse with their Russian counterparts, assuming they were already on friendly terms. In essence, respondents did not equate the actions of the Russian government with those of the concept of Russia.

This changed following the events of 2022. Following the full-scale invasion, where respondent's lives, livelihoods, families, and identity were under attack, there was a concerted effort to expel all Russian influence from their lives and that of their families. Language became one of the focal points for most respondents.

> *"They try to change the language, to identify, to start to identify and to understand the value of language and Ukrainian traditions (Natalia)"*

All 14 respondents noted that since 2022, they have made a concerted effort to either speak only in Ukrainian, if they spoke it fluently before, or to begin to learn Ukrainian.

> *"They have spoken in Russian all their lives and it's tough to change their language and try to speak in Ukrainian, but I'm happy that people trying to do this. I hope we'll speak in Ukrainians soon. I decided that I will speak only Ukrainian because it's my language and I should respect my language. (Kate)"*

Language has become a key tool in the consolidation of a new collective national identity. While it may be slow, a change is apparent. According to Herron and Clem, "the reported use of Ukrainian language has increased since February 2022, notably in parts of Ukraine that have been traditionally viewed as Russian-speaking. While the change is small, the implications are substantial: Ukrainians are behind their language and culture as well as their government. (Herron and Clem, 2023)." This change is language use is shown in figure 2 below, signifying that Ukrainian is being used more often across all regions. Trauma could have resulted in a vulnerable return to the influence of the Russkiy Mir, but the resiliency of Ukrainians resulted in a renewal of their own language and culture.

Figure 2: Reported Language Use in Ukraine by Year

Source: Info Sapiens Omnibus Surveys
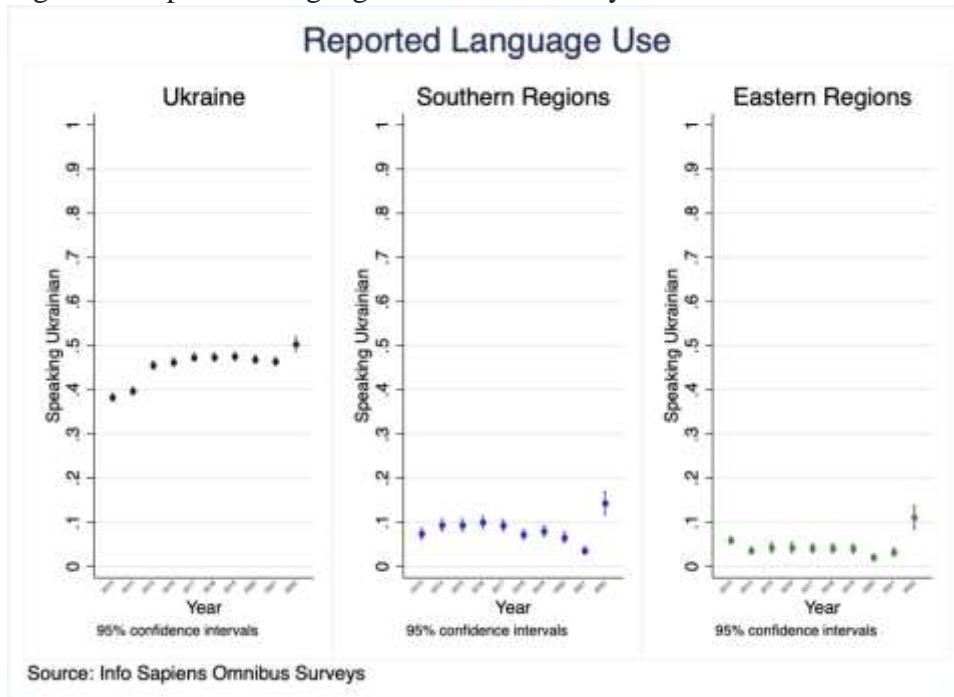
Though many of the respondents still speak Russian at home, as they grew up with Russian and do not think that the Russian language should be excised from Ukraine due to practical circumstances, they all believe that a nation cannot exist without the use of their own language. As their language has been historically suppressed, the existence and use of the Ukrainian language has become a source of pride, regardless of region. The desire to speak Ukrainian became a unifying force for all respondents.

One reason for this is their feeling of necessity of language as a delineation of collective national identity. Respondents noted that hearing the Russian language, outside of their close group, was a traumatic trigger because it caused anxiety and insecurity of not knowing where the person was from. Respondents discussed traveling in the future and being equated with Russians by people in other countries who cannot tell the difference in ethnicity. The desire to not be called Russian was a primary reason for respondent's desire to improve their Ukrainian or to solely speak Ukrainian.

> *"Especially the language, because it is a direct identifier, because I was a foreigner. And when I heard the Russian language, it scared me, because I did not understand whether it was a Ukrainian or a Russian. I did not understand that type, and people abroad do not understand whether it is Ukrainian or Russian. (Alina)"*

> *"I have been communicating in Ukrainian for a year. But I have a son and a husband. The man speaks Russian, although he is a military man. And the son, unfortunately, also communicates in Russian, but he already inserts Ukrainian words in the context. That is, it is already beginning to develop in the Ukrainian language. I am very happy about this because it is important to me. I believe that it is not a type, it is an indicator of a nation, it is a language, it is important. Therefore, I want my child to communicate in Ukrainian, and I want him to have nothing to do with Russia. (Alina)"*

> *"I feel more connected to Ukrainian language, even though my family was russified in the 20th century, so I grew up in primarily Russian language speaking family. (Mariia)"*

Another change in identity is the desire to increase the reach of Ukrainian media and to extricate Russian media from Ukraine. Prior to 2022, many respondents listened to Russian music and media because it was more developed. However, as most Russian personalities did not denounce the War and buying Russian music meant that they were, in essence, supporting the producers who, in turn, financially supported the Russian war effort, which they see as antithetical to their interests to support Russian media. Therefore, the majority of the respondents decided to boycott Russian-produced media after 2022 as they felt that it only served as propaganda and funded the war effort.

> *"it's the twenty-fourth of February, two thousand and twenty-two, I put an end to everything Russian. That is, it is not only about the language, it is about all this, about culture, it is about music, it is about series, films, about all of Russia. (Alina)"*

Another signifier for Ukrainians is a re-commitment to their native soil and their traditions, an homage to independent Ukraine that was traumatically colonized. Respect for the homeland and the desire to protect it is a primary feature explaining Ukraine's resilience.

> *"To respect roots, to respect our relatives who were fighting for our freedom (Natalia)"*

> *"Ukrainian for me is to be the part of Ukrainian culture, to understand, to have some roots, first of all, to be Ukrainian, that you have, you had some, some specific feeling. When you can hear Ukrainian songs and you can understand the context of some*

books, you can understand the literature, you can understand some things that you cannot explain to the foreigners. (Nick)"

Respect and deference for past generations and past roots creates an outcome where Ukraine has the ability to reformulate their identity around "being Ukrainian" and keeping their traditions alive can be equated with resiliency. This may not have occurred had it not have been for the trauma that ensued following the invasion, pushing Ukrainians to rethink who they are.

Respondents have noted that there are glaring differences between Russian culture, which respondents see as an amalgamation of past theft, and Ukrainian culture, which respondents stated was older and richer than Russian culture, as the Kievan Rus were situated in Kyiv.

> *"Ukrainian Russian historical ties, I would say it's, that's the best analogy I found is as if France and Italy would say that, or one of them would say that another is the same people as them only because in the mediaeval times, they were a part of one country. And they speak the same group of languages. (Mariia)"*

Prior to 2022, respondents noted that they either thought of Russia as a brother, due to propaganda focusing on these cultural ties or were indifferent to the discourse surrounding the topic. However, following 2022, this changed, and Ukrainians actively decided to separate Ukrainian culture from Russian culture.

> *"If Russia think that they should destroy Ukraine, they should fight against Ukraine. Doesn't mean that they have some value. So why that should not have value for me at that moment, if they're fighting against Ukrainian identity, that mean that we should value these things. (Nick)"*

> *"Many people considered Russians in Ukraine as brothers, brother nations, that kind of propaganda of Russia. We were extremely tolerant towards Russia. We believed that they were our brothers, and many people were impressed after the Russians behavior towards the war. Many people believed that if Putin starts war, Russians will be against. I knew that they won't be against, but I didn't know that the percentage of them [that support it] would be so high. (Yan)*

> *"Better relationships after the war in some decades between Ukrainian and Russians. It's not the question of Ukrainians attitude towards Russia, but the question of a*

Russian attitude towards Ukraine. They could not even in their minds even a bit realize why we are those who we are, that we are not their brothers, that we are just neighbors. (Zoriana)"

Ukrainians, respondents stated, were individualistic people who have gained strength and resilience through their historical struggles and value the roots, traditions, and freedom within their identity above all else. These traits are contrary to those of Russians who respondents noted are communal, chained, and unable to think for themselves.

"And I think it's like in your code, like in chromosome. I think you understand me. And I don't know how Russian people will think about liberation (Liora)"

"They are interconnected in somewhat chains, like we are interconnected with will, with strength, with love to country. And they're interconnected by chains somewhat, if I can't say that it was a slavery chains. So they're, yes, they're all also united, but in a way that they're like a sheep, somewhat herd of sheep. (Svitlana)"

"For me, being Ukrainian. By the way, I started to understand this about six months ago. For me, being Ukrainian means not being ashamed of it. First of all, it is to be proud of being born in Ukraine. It means first of all to respect one's traditions, language, to support the entire culture as much as possible and to use it yourself (Alina)"

While identity changes can be brief, as sudden trauma forces one to adjust a person understanding of their "Self" for preservation, the respondent noted that they believe that the effect of the War on unifying Ukraine was not temporary but a permanent fixture of their collective national identity, as noted by Social Identity theory.

"I would say they're long-term changes because the events influenced, practically I love everyone personally. And as soon as this change happened as it was for me and for millions of people, I would say there is no going back from the reality that you wake up in when you realize that you don't have to be dependent on the influence that you were force fed with, uh, money that was brought into influencing your opinion. (Mariia)"

The connection and unity experienced by the Ukrainian population following the conflict has expanded the in-group to all Ukrainians who are aligned with the nation and its roots while

51

creating Russians as the out-group. The positive outcome to the Ukrainian collective identity will exhibit itself in rebuilding the country as each citizen feels closer to one another, further developing democratic institutions which will in turn continue to project and convey resilience.

7.4 Freedom and Independence as Markers of Resilience

All 14 respondents mentioned, in their discussion on what being Ukrainian is and the difference between Ukraine and Russia, mentioned their belief that Ukraine is a country built around freedom and independence.

> *"I have been sure that we can resist that they cannot break because we have a good motivation. You should surround your home to the people from country. Everyone has some value of this freedom, everyone, some value traditions. (Nick)"*

> *"But for example, you can use all the languages, it's no problem. We are living in freedom country. Cause democratic way, it's freedom. If the president, don't hear the citizen, citizens start to do some global change, in this case because we like the freedom (Oleg)"*

A majority of respondents stated that Ukraine is a country that, while not a part of the West, does hold certain Western values; primarily the freedom of speech and ability to change their political system: liberal democratic values.

> *"To be here, to communicate with my people, to feel freedom and to wake up every day with the thought that we are here thanks to our soldiers, and we can continue. (Sasha)"*

This points to a strong civil society that works with the government to bolster the rights of its citizens. Respondents pointed out that Ukraine has a history of peaceful protests that effectuate change within their political institutions. As Professor Snyder notes in regard to Ukraine, "Ukraine is different from Russia thanks to its distinct history, including the history of these past 30 years, since the end of the Soviet Union. While Putin has pushed his country into the quicksand of myth, Ukrainians — with their votes, their protests and their defiance — have pushed their way into a confident sense of who they are. (Snyder, 2023)" Examples of past forms of resiliency include the Revolution of Dignity in 2013 and the Orange Revolution in 2004, where unpopular policies were amended after civil society, many of

which originated through the youth, took to the streets in protest. These youth, and the people of Ukraine more generally, feel "that with the start of the full-scale invasion in February 2022, Ukraine became not only the centre of a geopolitical conflict, but also a place where universal values, such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, are at stake. (Levchenko, 2022)." They see themselves as vanguards of these values as the border of Europe strengthened through trauma and the willpower to expound on the difference between their own free culture and Russia's oppressed culture.

There is also a strong belief in an individualistic society where citizens can choose their own paths and think for themselves. While the trauma of past events could have maintained an identity of victimhood, Ukraine has historically and resiliently distanced itself collectively from its neighbor.

> *"The main difference that is also quite popular now in Ukrainian public discourse is that Ukrainian culture is more individualistic, and focused on individual freedoms. And Russian culture is more communal and focused on communal greatness, on achievements. (Mariia)"*

> *"And I would say that we had to gain this perspective in order to survive as a nation. And because every person had to take responsibility for trying to preserve the culture, and the nation and language. So maybe this kind of personal responsibility when you can rely on this. So when you're in Independence, you have like systems of support. The society doesn't discriminate against you. But when you live under a foreign rule, you can only rely on your closest circle and yourself in order to resist this. (Mariia)"*

Respondents mentioned the history of Ukraine and the influences that it received as being a borderland, which the moniker Ukraine stands for. Ukraine, in Ukrainian, means on the edge, which is something that Ukraine has always been, straddling both the other European countries as well as the Russian Empire. Societies that are borderlands with a large frontier for agriculture, tend to be more individualistic due to being further from a central ruling authority and Ukraine, historically, oversaw "individual farming and property [that] were the norm well into Russian rule (Schulman, 1999:1017)" marking a difference in the cultures of Ukraine and Russia.

This differs from Russia, say the respondents, which they see as a collectivist society that has no opportunity for self-reflection or desire for political reforms due to a weak civil society. Unlike in Ukraine, respondents pointed out that Russians either do not wish to protest, as they

require an *'iron hand' (Liora)* or are actively persuaded from protesting against the government. They see Russians as citizens that live in fear of their government instead of citizens who cooperative with their government. Either Russian citizens are *'brainwashed'*(Natalia) into believing that their government has their best interests in mind, that their culture and government is both supreme and simultaneously under attack, or they are suppressed.

> *"And the other thing is if we don't like something in Ukraine, if we don't like something in government or something, we go on square, we speak about this loudly, we go on rallies or something Russian minds are not like this. They, they are afraid, they are brainwashed. They are not so strong. They are kind of weak (Natalia)"*

Ukrainians, on the other hand, cooperate with their government to push for more Western ideology, especially those that move closer to social liberalism. As more youth travel abroad, especially as students, they become open to new ideas, and view others with a feeling of positivity at best or indifference at worst. Ukrainian culture has, according to Schulman, have always embraced tolerance towards others (Schulman, 1999: 1019). According to a survey conducted in 2022 by the Kyiv Institute of Sociology, youth in Ukraine are more likely to wish that their country is more LGBT friendly, with "24% having a positive attitude, 58.8% — indifferent, and only 16.9% — negative (KIIS, 2022)", which had grown 1.5 times since the previous survey in 2016. This could be an outcome of Russia's attempt to exalt itself as the vanguard of traditional values, which the youth are pushing back against. This new open-mindedness is why the majority of respondents stated that being Ukrainian is more about citizenship and even feeling than it is about ethnicity, an approach moving towards tolerance and freedom than antipathy and oppression.

The open-mindedness that the youth exhibit in Ukraine could be due to the ability to travel, work, and study in the E.U. Due to the signing of the Association Agreement in 2013, following the Revolution of Dignity, Ukrainians were not restricted into entering the E.U. With more access to both education and media disseminated in the E.U., plus the individualistic mentality to Ukrainian society, a shift towards liberalism, and corresponding democratic values, occurred.

What can be taken from these answers is that respondents believe that unlike Russians, Ukrainians have agency in their political sphere, an important factor in democratic resiliency.

"To be Ukrainian is to be completely independent, separated, to have an inner sense of freedom. (Zoriana)"

This is especially important as Ukraine is a relatively new country that is still consolidating its political values. While many respondents have pointed out that corruption still exists within the political elite, but they are hopeful that much of the oligarchical structure of the economy is due to Russia's influence and that the War will create an opportunity for Ukraine to extricate itself from this influence. Closer ties to the E.U. will mean more pressure from E.U. conditionality, which may also strengthen the rule of law (Khvostova, 2023). The government of Ukraine has already begun the process, confiscating assets of oligarchs and banks linked to Russia (Savchuk et al, 2023). These managerial actions "by the government…have strengthened their legitimacy and trust in the people's eyes at the expense of oligarchic groups (Romanyshyn, 2023)," which will aid in the continued cooperation between state and civil society, which in turn will reinforce Ukrainian's new collective national identity.

7.5 Ukraine as Occupied Territory and Appropriated Culture

Another prevalent data point in my research dissecting Ukrainian identity is the respondent's belief in Russia as a thief, which is the origin of their historical trauma and need for resilience. To those interviewed, there is no such a construct as Russian culture. Russian culture is the appropriation of other cultures, primarily Ukrainian. They see Russia as a force which envelops other cultures and then calls it Russkiy Mir (Russian World). Historically, "Russians/Soviets were often seen as barbarians by the inhabitants of…Eastern Europe (Moore, 2001: 121) (Klvanova, 2018: 141)", pillaging and incorporating remnants of other cultures into their own.

Respondents have indicated that most of what Russian culture is, and the discourse surrounding Ukrainian culture being a part of Russian culture, as both President Putin and former Prime Minister and current deputy chairman of the Russian Security Council, Dmitri Medvedev put, is in reverse. As both peoples find their origins in the Kievan Rus, the Viking settlers of the land that is now Kyiv, respondents maintain their opinion that Russia, as the larger entity, has gained its culture either from appropriation or suppression of Ukrainian culture.

> *"Russian culture is stolen culture because they like from their plant land, they didn't have nothing when the key rules has been exist. They didn't have, like even the definition of culture or the things says they could name, like a culture is a different, it's not like about some heritage. Culture is about lifestyle and their lifestyle is most like to live from day to day, from day to day. They didn't build like a heritage from their next generation. (Kseniya)"*

> *"Ukrainians all history to protect our land. And there is the position of Russia all history to conquer (Natalia)"*

The data from the respondents suggests that an important part of Ukrainian identity since 2022 has concentrated on the securitization of culture, given that both Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev, have stated that Ukrainians and Russians, and therefore their cultures, are the same. This is a major point of contention for the respondents, who view Ukrainian culture as completely different.

> *"They're trying when they're trying to explain that everyone who speaks Russian is Russian, that's not correct because they have colonized this country. And if we are the same people by Russians, they cannot speak everyday life Ukrainian? (Nick)"*

> *"No, we are not the same. And we never were. They, I think they tried to make us like them, but they failed at it even despite all these historical enforcements like all this Holodomor, all this deportation Ukrainians to the Russia and then place in Russians instead in the region. (Svitlana)"*

The respondents noted that Ukrainian culture is older and richer than the Russian culture and that Russian culture only exists as a bastardized version of all the former colonies that the empire occupied and enslaved since its inception. Respondents believe that historically, Russian culture is one that exists as an oppressor, one that stifles Ukrainian culture. This historical repression if Ukrainian identity has created a generational and cultural trauma that has reapplied itself during the full-scale invasion, coupled with added psychological trauma implanted onto the youth. Confoundingly, Ukrainian actions have shown their resiliency through a preparedness for a long fight. Having gained independence in 1991, Ukrainian society has been moving away from Russia. As Ukraine has historically tried to progress,

Russia has mollified its achievements and claimed it as their own, citing authors such as Bulgakov and Gogol, who were Ukrainian by birth.

> *"It's like a jealous for all our time and even for this 30 years when we not became. A civilization that we renewed our civilization after Soviet Union, but they couldn't do that (Kseniya)"*

> *"I am start to more deep to learn this question and I have learned that Russian culture eats, how can I say, they steal our culture. (Ivan)"*

> *"Russians like to steal our culture, our traditions, our even our language, our songs. (Kate)"*

The impact of the separation from Russian culture is an important one for Ukrainian identity. Many respondents noted that foreigners have always thought that Ukraine was a part of Russia, if they had even heard about Ukraine at all. As the youth become more politically savvy and galvanize to rebuild Ukrainian institutions after the War, the new collective national identity centered around reclaiming their perceived stolen culture, in practice, would mean a further distancing from their neighbor to the East.

> *"They have spent their entire existence somehow neutralizing Ukrainian culture. And it was always and everyone, every period of time it happens. And now it is not an exception. If you don't end it now, it will also happen later. (Sasha)"*

The outcome of this action would see a more resilient Ukraine, one that struggles to reform and grow on its own terms rather than influenced by outside forces. Identity is not only important from a psychological perspective of knowing oneself and feeling more connected to a community, but as a foundation for resiliency, a salient part of the nation-building process.

7.6 Resilience in Ukraine as a Historical Imperative-

Given the historical relationship between the two political entities, respondents noted that while the full-scale invasion was a shock, as they did not believe that such wars could still be possible on the European continent in the 21st century, they were not shocked that Russia has tried to expand into Ukrainian territories. A state of shock transpires into a sense of vulnerability, from which resilience as a process of societal adaptation, is operationalized

(Kurnyshova, 2023: 6). Historically, Russia has pursued an expansionist strategy, accruing territories and imposing its language and culture on them. The respondents have noted Russia as an occupier as well as a colonizer of Ukraine, which mollified the initial shock that occurred on the day of the invasion.

> *"Throughout all history, they were trying to destroy us and they're still doing it. And they are doing it in the ways they have already done it before. Like it's absolutely the same. The same ways from them, the same means the same methods. In a way the history repeats itself. (Svitlana)"*

As Svitlana mentions, the same methods for destruction of identity and theft of land have been Russia's modus operandi, slowly chipping away at any favorable relationship with Russia. Consequently, this ongoing trauma has created the opportunity for resiliency, as knowing the enemy and their tactics means that one can prepare a counter, which is precisely what Ukraine accomplished. Respondents noted that after 2014, the Ukrainian army was beginning to train to counter Russian aggression with Ukrainian people finding their identity in struggle against a common enemy, typically Russia.

> *"We know them and we know how to fight them and how to not kill them all, but to defeat them (Zoriana)"*

> *"People always knew that Russia is the main enemy for us. That all our historical sufferings are because of Russia. (Zoriana)"*

For some, to be Ukrainian means constant struggle for the homeland, their language, and their culture. This all-encompassing desire to persevere and belief in the eventual defeat of Russia is a form of resilient identity, bound by struggle and trauma, but evolving into a sense of strength through sameness. Therefore, while they were initially surprised by the launch of units and rockets into their country, they stated that Ukrainians are mentally prepared for defending their territory against Russia.

> *"To be Ukrainian is to struggle constantly, and not always physically, but mentally. (Zoriana)"*

Ukrainian resilience is resolute because of adaptation through the trauma of struggle. According to resilience theory, struggle leads to vulnerability and trauma which, in turn, can either weaken the organism or make it more resilient.

> *"But in general, yeah, it's affected, it was maybe the most influential period of the war in terms of emotional influence on me. And as that stayed with you, or as it kind of dissipated, I would say that no one can survive in this level of stress for a long time. So the organism has to adapt, sooner or later. (Mariia)"*

Having struggled against Russia throughout its history, Ukraine was uniquely prepared to adapt and counter the threat. Respondents have noted that Ukrainians are resilient and steadfast in this War because, even though they are outnumbered, they are more motivated as they are defending their homeland against an enemy, thus uniting them.

> *"[We believed] the Russian army won't have that moral condition that Ukrainians have. (Yan)"*

> *"As if it is already coded in our genes. (Svitlana)"*

> *"Because in all periods of Ukrainian history, we can see that Ukrainians always fight with people who wants to steal their freedom. So we get more stronger. (Ivan)"*

The resiliency that Ukraine has shown is indicative of its unison as a country. Prior to the War, the discourse was one of separation and differences between regions, but post-invasion, it was clear that Ukrainians are connected by the common struggle to be able to keep not only their culture, traditions, and territory, but also their sovereignty and agency. The effect of the resiliency of Ukraine has been shown by its ability to continue to not only fight, but hold steady and revive their effort, adapting to their enemies' attacks. Using Bourbeau's MMR typology of resilience, Ukraine has maintained its resolve and institutions while also renewing its capabilities in the field and in its democracy and civil society (Bourbeau, 2017: 29). The cause of this resolve was a concentrated effort by "Ukrainian policymakers [to] pursue an integrated response…described as total democratic resilience…focusing on democratic reforms as part of its whole-of-society resistance to Russian attacks (Romanyshyn, 2023)" A collective national identity that centers around freedom and democracy builds upon itself and creates a situation of unity, where members of the in-group are fighting for the same cause.

Prior to 2022, few outside of Ukraine, and even those inside, would have given Ukraine a chance to last more than 2 weeks against the more numerous Russian army. Government officials, pundits, and analysts, "including in the U.S. intelligence community, believed that Ukraine would be quickly overrun by superior and larger Russian forces. (O'Hanlon et al,

2023)". Yet Ukraine persevered through its resilience and dedication to institutional reforms. Pisano (2022) argues that a "key to maintaining Ukrainians' unprecedented wartime engagement as participation in ordinary democratic governance may lie with the popular decentralization reforms (Pisano, 2022: 12)", which have moved to devolve power from the central authority to actors such a civil society groups and local government officials. Consequently, resilience on a local level has "contributed to the ability of local governments, volunteers and population to deal together with the shocks [and trauma] of war (Kurnyshova, 2023: 17)".

8. Impact- The Future of Ukraine

The impact of the War and its corresponding trauma coupled with the resilient response lead to changes in Ukrainian collective national identity and thus the future impact for Ukraine will be profound. The explanation of such is the purpose of this thesis, as, due to the one-year timing of the War, there have been few articles published on forecasting the effects of these changes and resilience to future nation building.

One major change, and the most significant, is that Ukraine will no longer be seen as a sphere of influence of Russia but will regain its national agency. While it is unknown if Ukraine will ascend to the E.U. in the near future given the enlargement fatigue within the bloc as well as the candidate status of countries that have more time to implement the conditional rules such as Montenegro and North Macedonia, Ukraine has a path forward. Many of the respondents noted that they wish for a more independent Ukraine, which was a surprise, as this author believed that the youth would lead the charge to toward stronger relations with the E.U.

> *"I think that we, it's my opinion, that we have to focus more internally on ourselves.*
> *Of course, we have to take this idea of Western values. I dunno is a guardian star for*
> *us, but to focus more on developing those values. Like in our own way (Svitlana)"*

This is contrary to a survey done by the National Democratic Institute in Ukraine in May 2022 which found that "94% of respondents in western Ukraine, 93% in the center and north, and 84% in the east and south of the country would like Ukraine to join the EU (Ukrinform, 2022)". The discrepancy may exist in sample size or that Ukrainian youth would like to take back their agency, without any conditions for the time being. It is understandable that being referred to as a buffer zone and never completely having an independent government free of outside influence, coupled with the internal problems the E.U. is facing, has soured the youth. They understand that they would have to give up a certain amount of autonomy to join the E.U., and with the current situation, this outcome is not desirable.

> *"I would say that there are some risks [for Europeanization]. Some risks for how*
> *much independence Ukraine will have over its internal policy which regular*
> *Ukrainians, don't, think about for now because it's not the main focus nowadays.*
> *(Mariia)"*

"[Ukraine] is a separate strong independent country It's a huge territory. It's not even profit well for Europe (Kseniya)"

While joining the E.U. may not be in the foreseeable future according to the respondents, many still saw European values as something to emulate. Rule of law, LGBTQ rights, and freedom of movement are all policies that were reacted upon positively. This is a stark movement away from the Russkiy Mir narrative where nepotism and anti-liberal values have become the cultural zeitgeist. The individualist nature of Ukrainians and a strong identity of freedom means that respondents want Ukraine to remain an open country, yet dictated by Ukrainian interests as part of their collective national identity. A common conceptualization of national identity lies in "both individual and collective levels, that is, both as individuals' attachment to their perceived nation and as the nation's supposedly distinct organisation (Kulyk, 2016: 590)." Individualism as a cornerstone of Ukrainian identity was, in the discourse, negotiated as the myth of the Cossacks, a frontier army for the Kievan Rus, who created the "political and military organization of the Zaporozhian Host" (Schulman, 1999: 1018) which countered invaders and kept the individualist rights of the Rus'ka Pravda, rights of people, intact (Schulman, 1999: 1018). While Ukraine is an individualist society, this identity runs through both national collective and soil, emitting a strong response of difference from the collectivist Russian culture where "the individual counts for nothing; everything must be sacrificed to the general good, which is embodied in the Czar' (Rudnitsky, 1918: 190) (Schulman, 1999: 1017). Individualism for Ukrainians is the founding marker for their desire for freedom, independence, and democracy, which they see as innate to their collective national identity and has historically been taken from them, resulting in the generational trauma that galvanizes them.

Another outcome of the War that has drastically altered Ukraine is the strengthening of civil society. Outnumbered by the enemy, the government realized that it needed to work with grassroots groups in order to facilitate aid around the country. Respondents noted that NGOs did little to assist and that it was Ukrainians themselves that funded and distributed aid to both soldiers and displaced residents. This new level of trust between the government and its citizens was the primary reason for the resilient nature of Ukraine. Respondents noted that the decision by President Zelensky and many government officials to remain in Kyiv during the early days of the War, instead of accepting the invitation to leave, was a source of motivation amongst the traumatized population and gave them hope.

"Our president was offered from the first days to evacuate, he got call calls from leaders of other countries to leave from country. I would say if he did that, we would lose country for sure (Natalia)"

"That's how I understood this strength and pride for my country, for the president. When we didn't surrender Ukraine, when we didn't surrender all the cities, even though. I know that there were moments even in Chernihiv. When, when it could happen, let's say so, but thanks to some internal force. Thanks to the way our president stood thanks to the way he ignited this faith in us. (Alina)"

Zelensky's and his government's decision to remain has caused his approval rating to jump from 10% in September 2019 to 94% in 2022 (Akers, 2022), a sign that Ukrainians have collectively consolidated behind their government, a major step toward bolstering democratic resilience.

For a country that was previously known for corruption, this coalition between civil society and government will reap political rewards as they will be able to work together instead of against one another when the War ends. Once Russian interests are expelled from the government, the country will be able to renew and rebuild per Bourbeau's MMR typology.

A further point of interest is that Ukrainian citizens have also become more politically aware, in other words, a "birth of a nation out of people supposedly lacking in national consciousness (Kulyk, 2016: 588)", while pre-War, they did not know much about their government and its structure as they did not trust it.

"In Ukraine, most people, a privileged majority know the head of leading parties, the name of the president of the mayor, the name of the Prime minister, other ministers, deputy mayors, and more. So it is an advantage and it is also a disadvantage, a big disadvantage, because many people know about policy, but they do not want to get a little bit deeper to politics, to understand its roots, to understand more historic arts. (Yan)"

A population that moves from political ignorance to political awareness means more accountability for the government. This will lead to lower corruption and higher regard for democratic institutions. Whether the mutualistic relationship that has been fostered after the

full-scale invasion will last following the end of the War is unclear, but the foundation has been laid.

The final outcome of the War that will assist in a beneficial future for Ukraine is the rehabilitation of their collective national identity. The trauma of the War recommitted Ukrainians to one another in order to achieve the changes necessary for the country to evict itself from the doldrums of European ignominy. While respondents do not particularly see Ukraine as a European country, it is moving towards that distinction. President Zelensky created the narrative that this is a War for European values that is being fought on Ukrainian soil. E.U. countries have mostly rallied around this statement with Ukraine achieving a fast-tracked candidate status, something that would have been unheard of prior to the War (Almqvist, 2023). While respondents have noted that Ukraine is not yet a part of Europe, Europe does not share this sentiment. Countries such as Finland, the Baltic states, and Poland have reaffirmed their commitment to seeing that Ukraine will be more integrated into the European community, the start of which was civil societies protest during the Euromaidan, which lead to the inception of the War.

However, Ukraine will still experience challenges in its rebuilding process. The first of which is strengthening its economy, which is currently in debt and will need to begin a lengthy rebuilding process. This process may, in fact, hinder the democratic resilience that was accomplished during the War. Infrastructure works will take years and without foreign aid, the government will need to borrow money, further worsening its debt. A worsening economy may have the outcome of a cynical response to democratic reforms. Respondents have stated that they expect Russia to pay reparations and cease any contact with Ukraine, much like Germany after WWI, and while this outcome is inevitable, the amount that Russia will pay should be tempered.

> *"You understand maybe, or no, Russian will never say. Okay. Yeah. It was my fault. I'm so sorry. This is reparation for you (Liora)"*

> *"After all that should be Ukraine should took as much resources from Russia as possible. (Nick)"*

> *"We believe that in the next, at least next 10 years, Russians should be prohibited to enter our territory. Even if they are oppositional ones, even if they have fundamental reasons to visit Ukraine. It doesn't matter for us. We don't want to see them. (Yan)"*

A bankrupted Russia will only push it further into the corner, meaning that any reconciliation will be impossible. While respondents to the interviews are justified in their vitriol towards the Russian state, the practical matter is that an expansionist neighbor will once again attack if pressured to do so, similar to the events that lead to WWII. Zelensky, however, mirrors the respondents desire to hold Russia accountable stating "It is our historical responsibility - of modern generations - to make full punishment for aggression inevitable in order to prevent not only the recurrence of aggression against our country, but also new wars (Zelensky, 2023)." Whether this attitude will prevent future wars is a research question for the future.

How the new government, with a newfound trust from its civil society, handles the issue of Russia following the end of the War will be one of its most important foreign policy decisions as it may cause a chasm between its people and itself.

> *"I, for example, call on people to be more conscious and finally understand that, after the end of a full-scale war, we cannot allow Russia to approach us again, not even a step, not even on the threshold can not. We should be removed from this country, because I know that she is like, she can do it again, and more than once, because we and we are like a callus on her finger, because we live better, we develop, we move somewhere and type, and they cannot live with it, that we are better than them. (Alina)"*

> *"The duration of the war is also an essential part of postponing or not this neutrality in the treatment of towards Russians. Because every day, every hour, every month, they continue to commit situations, to commit that crimes, that won't vanish out of our mind. (Zoriana)"*

> *"I don't want even for trade, like say energy or something, in my positive view in my imagination. I want Russia to stay. I want Russians not to spread everywhere, all over the world. I want them to close in their country and just to live their life and leave us alone. (Natalia)"*

Another issue that Ukraine will face is demographic, furthering national trauma. The trauma from displacement due to the invasion harkens back to the forced deportations during Soviet times, an event that is branded into Ukrainian generation memory and subsequent trauma. The ongoing progress of an independent Ukraine is an indicator of how resilient the country

remains in the face of traumatic events. A new identity that values roots, traditions, and homeland may have the effect of repatriation, lessening the trauma of displacement, and further showcasing Ukraine's resilience.

As 20% of the population have left the country and another 20% have been displaced within the country (UNHCR, 2023), the policies the government passes to lure its citizens back to Ukraine will shape the economic future of the country. Fewer people, especially youth, means fewer workers which will create another obstacle to getting the economy back on track. However, the change in identity which refocuses on Ukrainian roots and a desire to assist in rebuilding the nation due to the unity of the peoples is an indicator that many will move back. If this occurs, then the new collective national identity will consolidate and become a part of society.

> *"They just need to be given an opportunity, and everyone has this opportunity now. Therefore, our specialists and generally people who accept it, participate. They will also be in great demand by the cool staff (Sasha)"*

As Ukrainians move back, they will have more economic opportunity in their own country as Russian influence and Russian workers leave. Moreover, internal displacement has given Ukraine to extricate itself of previous regional biases. As Kurnyshova notes, "the displacement of one-third of the country's population within Ukraine is a unique phenomenon with potentially positive repercussions, as despite mutual prejudices and stereotypes existed before the war, residents of different regions had to cooperate and get to know each other (Kurnyshova, 2023: 17)", allowing for a situation where the trauma of displacement can accentuate beneficial pathways that portray democratic resiliency in the form of an integrated collective national identity.

Lastly, the future of Ukraine largely depends on victory, regardless of the length of time, though respondents have noted that they are ready to resist, as part of their resilient identity, for as long as necessary.

> *"I'm ready to do that even for 10 years. I am not have a feeling that, uh, today, tomorrow, uh, the war will stop. I think that it's for a long. And I'm ready to that and I'm ready to fight. (Kseniya)"*

While respondents are optimistic that Ukraine will eventually succeed and regain its territorial integrity along with currently occupied Donbas and Crimea, with 90% saying they

believe in total victory and 85% unwilling to give territorial concessions (Romanyshyn, 2023), a victory depends on the willingness of allies to continue providing Ukraine with both financial and military assistance. A prolonged War could cause fatigue in states that are removed from the War by distance, thus putting pressure on the level of resilience in Ukraine. However, certain countries, such as the U.S. have sought to alleviate this fear of abandonment, passing U.S. House Resolution H.Res.322 which maintains that the U.S. will continue to supply aid to Ukraine for as long as it takes (Nazaryan, 2023).

9. Hypothesis

As mentioned above in the chapter on the research question, this thesis highlighted 3 hypothesis that the author set out to prove. A detailed explanation of the results for the hypotheses will follow.

9.1. Hypothesis 1

> H1: *The War in Ukraine has pushed Ukrainian youth towards a more focused sense of Ukrainian-specific identity, across all regions.*

While there are some outliers in the data set, the majority of respondents claimed that the War has unified the country, regardless of the region, and therefore, consolidated the collective national identity of Ukraine. While there were some respondents that cognitively thought about their identity prior to the War, for the majority, their understanding of their identity was muted and ambivalent. This may be because a few of the respondents were teenagers prior to the 2022, but nevertheless, the trauma from the War has forced Ukrainians to actively focus on what it means to be Ukrainian. Prior to the War, many respondents just knew they were Ukrainian, but after the genesis of the invasion in 2022, they now understand what it means to be Ukrainian: to be free, independent, and resilient in the face of overwhelming odds.

This has also affected the collective national identity in that the majority of respondents want Ukraine to remain independent, to set its own course away from outside influences. Therefore, this hypothesis has been proven correct.

9.2. Hypothesis 2

> H2: *The trauma of the war will positively bring about a change in civic but not ethnic identity.*

The second hypothesis dealt with trauma as a unifying force for Ukrainian collective national identity. A focus on ethnic identity would be a dividing force that perpetuates the vestiges of a systemic denotation of a nation and the people that could claim a territory as their own. However, Ukrainian have shown that civic instead of ethnic markers are paramount for Ukrainian identity, with "[increased] reliance on residence in Ukraine as the basis for identifying with Ukrainian nationality and native language, supporting arguments that these categories should be treated as ethnonational rather than purely ethnic (Kulyk and Hale, 2021: 847) (Kulyk, 2018: 121)."

If Ukrainian became an ethnic identity, then all other settlers of Ukrainian lands throughout history and their contributions would be null. This would also create an "Other" during the post-war stage and make the nation-building process more contested. The author believes that the tragedy and horrors of the War would create a unifying traumatic experience where Ukrainians coalesce behind the notion that this War has affected all citizens and residents equally. This shared trauma would create a more open society, which linked the collective together, which a majority of the respondents mentioned. This is backed by the marker of Ukrainian culture as a magnanimous society where "foreigners of different beliefs and tribes' gathered for centuries, yielding a 'spirit of tolerance, absence of national arrogance' (Kostomarov, 1903: 53–54) (Schulman, 1999: 1019)"

While many respondents did note that they do not believe that one must be an ethnic Ukrainian to identify as Ukrainian, there were some exceptions. Their reasoning was that it would be difficult for those that weren't ethnic to truly understand the traditions and history of Ukrainian people. As their identity has been threatened, a more concise understanding of their roots has taken shape, causing this othering. While these respondents do believe that Ukraine should be free and open to anyone that wishes to support their culture, they stated that it would be difficult to accept these people into the Ukrainian in-group.

Therefore, this hypothesis is inconclusive. As the sample size of those interviewed was small, it is unknown how the Ukrainian population feels about interlopers. As Ukraine consists of many ethnic groups such as Greek, Tatar, Jewish, and Russian, the attack on Ukrainian identity specifically means that the trauma could have could have caused certain respondents to narrow their definition of who can identify as Ukrainian.

9.3 Hypothesis 3

> H3: *Ukrainian resilience, undermined at the start of the War, is the catalyst for the change in collective national identity and will broker a sustained push towards nationalizing democratic institutions.*

Ukrainian resilience, specifically the ability of the Ukrainian army to hold in the early days of the invasion, the Ukrainian political elite not evacuating the country, and the people remaining steadfast and motivated to repel Russian advances and donate and volunteer for the cause, are the primary reasons for the opportunity for the collective national identity to alter. Prior to the War, Ukrainian identity was one of struggle and victimhood, and while respondents have mentioned that to be Ukrainian is still to struggle, the new collective

national identity has replaced the victimhood mentality with one of strength. Respondents feel more optimistic now about their people and their country than prior to the War, with many saying that they were surprised by Ukrainian resilience. While they were initially fearful of how the first weeks would play out, they realized that their country had been prepared. Had Ukraine not been able to hold back the Russian advance in the early days of the War, a collective national identity built on fortitude would not have occurred and Ukraine would have continued being the victim. As many of the respondents have been able to continue their livelihoods while not under occupation has created the opportunity for them to reconfigure their identity after asking themselves what exactly is being threatened and what is Russia trying to take away.

While the data has shown that resilience was a catalyst for this new identity, the outcome of creating democratic institutions is inconclusive within the data set. While many Ukrainians stated that they would like to see Ukraine take on more Western values, get rid of corruption, and ascend as a proud country, a conclusion cannot be made if these respondents specifically would like to see more democratic institutions and whether this value is part of the new Ukrainian collective national identity.

10.   Summary of Results

As stated in the empirical data section above, the results have shown that the full-scale invasion starting on February 24, 2022, caused a collective trauma within the youth of Ukraine. While generational trauma remained prior and was reopened following the event, this effect was not as strong in the youth, unless stories were passed down from their elders about the traumatic historical relationship between Ukraine and Russia. The effect of the trauma was to unify the 4 different regions of Ukraine, though the data is inconclusive on whether they were not unified before. However, all respondents did note that, regardless, Ukraine as a nation has grown together instead of further apart, as was the goal of Russian propaganda. This psychological trauma, coupled with the historical trauma that already existed, served as a catalyst for a change in the collective national identity of Ukraine, one where citizens are able to participate in the process of their politics and push their government for a freer society and the change they wish to see. The new identity is a devolution back to their homeland and their roots, and a refocus on the achievements of Ukrainian culture and not an identity based on Russian, Slavic, or Soviet designations.

> *"What is post-Soviet country? After 30 years of independence, like it's almost a half century has gone and we are still post Soviet country? Like no, we are, we came a long way from that. And maybe now being Ukrainian for me means also declaring this. (Svitlana)"*

The new collective national identity was capable of surfacing due to the resiliency of the Ukrainian public and government leaders. Due to the historical trauma, Ukrainians were aware of their enemy, its motives, and its weaknesses, and had the motivation to protect themselves, something that had occurred through centuries. After gaining independence in 1991, respondents noted that there is a strong desire to no longer be occupied and shackled to a narrative that is not theirs. Essentially, Ukrainians are taking back their agency and using it to strengthen their resolve and consolidate their identity. On top of that, they are now proud of this new identity, while previously not considering such distinctions to be important.

The threat of the annihilation of the person, the group, and the identity has reinforced the vigor by which Ukrainians come together as a collective and as a nation, which will assist in the future nation-building process as they feel more connect. For example, regardless of region, all Ukrainians feel that after the War, the primary goal for the government should be

to help rebuild the destroyed lands, even if they are from a region not affected by the destruction, i.e. the Western region.

The respondents also noted that the changes to or the creation of a new collective national identity is a long-term phenomenon. Further research will need to occur to justify this claim, both following the War and in the years after, but this thesis is not able to substantiate whether the claim is accurate. However, given the trauma caused by the event, and the desire of the youth to extricate themselves from Russia, with the ability to do so becoming more evident, the author believes that these changes will last generations, until the memory of the War has dissipated and has become forgotten.

A brief analysis of the elasticity of identity and its durability is necessary. As noted earlier, further research must be done to find out if Ukrainian identity is largely focused on itself or if it is anti-Russian. Answers from respondents seem to point to the former, with a focus on culture, language, roots, and tradition, but the ongoing War means that the trauma is still fresh and feeling of acrimony towards Russia is prevalent.

11. Conclusion

The primary objective of this thesis is to illuminate the transformation in the Ukrainian collective national identity in the aftermath of the full-scale invasion as well as link the trauma endured by the Ukrainian collective to its resiliency. This evolution is notable, especially considering the relatively subdued aversion towards Russia following the 2014 incursions. The dynamic significantly altered on February 24, 2022, when Ukrainians felt a direct assault, resulting in immediate psychological trauma, as war arrived at their doorsteps rather than in a remote part of the country. Unlike in 2014, each Ukrainian citizen had to grapple with their personal identity and confront the implications of their Ukrainian-ness, a focal point of this thesis. Evidence gathered from respondents indicates that for most, there was no compelling need to introspect their identity prior to 2022. The fundamental shift lies in the fact that the invasion spanned across all regions, not confined to Donbas and Crimea, thus unifying Ukraine in a shared trauma. The result was a newly constructed identity founded upon strength of resilience.

The methodological approach adopted in this thesis is qualitative, utilizing interviews as the primary instrument for data collection. A total of 14 interviews were conducted within a span of two weeks within Ukrainian borders. Of these, eight were conducted in person, while six were conducted online, given the logistical challenges posed by the wartime conditions in certain regions. The participant pool comprised eight women and six men, aged 19 to 30, all Ukrainian nationals residing in Ukraine. The age bracket was selected in line with the thesis's focus on the evolving identity among the youth, defined by the European Union as individuals within this range. Notably, the author chose to include a 30-year-old participant, with the intent to include perspectives from individuals born post-Soviet Union, thereby controlling for that variable.

Although the 14 participants may not fully represent the entirety of Ukraine, this thesis establishes a connection between war experiences and traumatogenic changes, which, according to Alexander (2004), are instantaneous and enduring. Given the ongoing nature of the conflict, revisiting this topic for further research upon the war's conclusion is imperative. The nexus between the triad of concepts—trauma, identity, and resilience—is formed through a collective traumatic event that, as Alexander explains, necessitates the renegotiation of the collective national identity. In Ukraine's case, this newly forged identity

both encompasses and fosters resilience, bolstered by unity and an unwavering commitment to democratic values. Historically regarded as an Eastern European nation existing beyond the normative boundaries of Europe, Ukraine's emergent democratic resilience, in the face of waning democracies in EU member states, calls for a reevaluation of the concept of European identity. This conversation could prove invaluable for future research endeavors.

The empirical data obtained was subjected to thematic analysis, allowing for the categorization of respondents' answers by topics. The first finding reveals that trauma, indeed, serves as the primary catalyst for identity transformation among Ukrainian youth. Trauma induced by the full-scale invasion prompted respondents to disavow Russia— including its people, culture, and media—as a legitimate partner. Although the majority of respondents engaged with the Russian language, media, and people prior to 2022, this ceased after the invasion. Participants could no longer tolerate a nation and culture intent on eradicating their own, resulting in a historical reckoning. This shift towards the Ukrainian language and media transpired across all regions, indicating a potent solidarity among Ukrainians in their aversion to Russia. Since the invasion's onset, respondents have endeavored to speak more Ukrainian, as they perceive language as an indicator of national independence.

The second finding exposed a preference for an independent Ukraine with minimal ties to the West rather than an aspiration to join the EU. This contrasts with recent polls indicating that 90% of Ukrainians wish to join the EU following the war (Ukrinform, 2022). The discrepancy may be attributed to the small sample size; alternatively, it could reflect the Ukrainian youth's growing desire to assert their national agency and rebuild without excessive external influence and conditionalities. This outcome may be a short-term variance due to trauma.

This quest for independence corresponds to the research's third finding: a resurgence of the historical Ukrainian culture of individualism and freedom, which had been suppressed under centuries of Russian domination. Respondents perceive the war as an opportunity to reclaim the culture they believe was usurped through historical appropriations and forced assimilation, or Russification, of their territory. In contrast to Russia's authoritarian and collectivist culture, respondents highlighted Ukraine's traditionally open, tolerant, and individualistic culture, centered around freedom. The West's characterization of anything

contrary reflects a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of a narrative propagated by Russia.

A fourth conclusion further substantiates the proposition that Ukrainian youth will serve as the primary engine driving democratic resilience and distancing the nation from influences perceived to be the root cause of endemic corruption. This shift will be facilitated by a unified collective national identity that was absent prior to 2022. The invasion, through direct attacks or displacement, affected Ukraine as a whole. Respondents expressed a resolve to sustain resistance and foster nationwide development, transcending regional boundaries. Pre-2022 regional divisions have been effaced by the Russian invasion, giving rise to a consolidated belief in Ukraine's future democratic trajectory. Furthermore, respondents advocate that while Ukraine is not entirely European, it can no longer be disregarded as such. Their aspiration to reshape the nation in a uniquely Ukrainian vision, while incorporating Western ideals, will draw Ukraine closer to the West, effecting transformation in its institutions and foreign policy. Ukraine will no longer exist as a buffer zone between two powers, but as an autonomous nation capable of formulating policy decisions devoid of undue external influence.

The final outcome of the analysis illustrates that history and generational trauma are deeply embedded within the Ukrainian collective national identity. Holodomor, forced deportations, and enforced integration are memories Ukraine has sought to repress, and from which the youth have been distanced. The question remains as to how many generations will retain the memory of the war and the image of Russia as an adversary. Prior to the war, Russia was perceived as a brother, friend, or an entity of indifference, but the events of 2022 transformed Russia into an enemy in the eyes of respondents. This vitriol, potent within memory, stems from the respondents' displeasure over their lives being irrevocably altered and future plans disrupted, while the lives of Russians remain unaffected, and the Russian populace remains blissfully ignorant of the conflict that ensued.

Despite respondents' optimism regarding Ukraine's future, obstacles persist. The foremost among these is the reintegration of displaced persons, both within and outside Ukraine. With 20% of the population displaced, including around 10% who have left the country, impending economic hardships loom large. Although many respondents harbor hopes for Russian reparations to mitigate the impending economic difficulties, this outcome is not devoid of

consequences. The interplay between state and civil society will be put to the test regarding the Russia question, as citizens will demand a firm stance against Russia as a war criminal, advocating its weakening through repayment and sanctions. Conversely, the government may adopt a more pragmatic approach, which could impede reforms.

Limitations within the research can be attributed to the small sample size of the interviews which may not be indicative of the whole-scale desires of the totality of Ukrainian nationals. Furthermore, the long-term impact on changes in collective national identity can currently only be speculated, as further research will need to be conducted after the conclusion of the War.

While Ukraine has demonstrated resilience throughout the war, viewing it as an integral part of their identity, a key question is whether this newfound identity and sentiment will persist after the war's conclusion. Although this thesis does not directly address this question, future research is required to ascertain whether Ukraine can dispel the specter of Russia from their nation and progress in unity, or whether this transient change during wartime will dissipate and divisions will reemerge in the post-war period.

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13. Sample Interview Questions

1. For the record, can I get your name, age, city, and occupation.

2. What part of Ukraine are you from? Does the population of the city/town tend to identify more as a Ukrainian or Russian region in terms of language and culture?

3. What is your primary language at home? Has this changed since the start of the war?

4. Have your views on Russia, Russian people, and Russian culture changed since the start of the War? How so?

5. What does it mean to be Ukrainian to you? Do you believe this has changed since the War began?

6. How have your future plans changed since the start of this war?

7. How do you feel when Putin says there is no difference between Ukrainian and Russian identity?

8. What was the narrative regarding the Russian state growing up? Was it friendly or fearful?

9. Do you feel like Ukrainians were always prepared for something like this to occur?

10. Do you believe that Ukrainian is more of an ethnic or civic identity (based on citizenship)?

11. What effect has this War had on your psychology? Would you describe the War as a traumatic event? How so?

12. Has this War made you feel closer to your homeland and the Ukrainian people? Do you think that Ukrainians feel more connected to each other, regardless of regional differences?

13. Do you believe that Ukraine will come out of this war stronger than before in terms of:
    a. Economic Potential
    b. Solidarity
    c. Democratic Values

14. Do you believe Ukraine should focus internally, have closer ties to Russia, or have closer ties with the West?

15. What do you hope Ukraine looks like a decade from now?

16. The War was supposed to be over in one week and it has now been ongoing for 1 year. Has Ukrainian resilience surprised you in any way?

17. What do you feel are the main factors in this resilience? How has Ukraine kept going?

14. Informed Consent Form

Consent Form: Trauma and Resilience within Ukraine: How the Invasion has Effectuated Changes in Identity

Name of Researcher: Michael Adler
Activity: Master's Thesis
University: Tartu University

1. EXPLANATION OF THE RESEARCH and WHAT YOU WILL DO:
You are being asked to participate in a research paper on your view on your Ukrainian identity following the unlawful invasion and subsequent War in Ukraine by the Russian government. The aim of this paper is to look at how Ukrainian youth identity has changed since the inception of the war by way of trauma and how it has affected the resilience of the Ukrainian nation.

2. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW: Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. This interview will be recorded via Zoom app or dictaphone. You consent to allowing the professors of the course, and only the professors, to watch the video recording. You may ask to stop the recording for off the record conversation. You may ask that the recording be deleted post-interview.

3. CONFIRMATION OF INFORMED CONSENT. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by telling the researcher that you agree to participate in the research. This consent form is yours to keep.

4. Confidentiality: All material gathered will be confidential and no names will be shared. Your interview will be transcribed and used as evidence for the paper. By signing the consent form, you agree to allow the author to use your name, unless otherwise indicated. All materials will be disposed of once the paper is written, at the request of the participant.

Name:_____

DOB:_____/_____/_____

Signature:_____

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I, Michael Adler, herewith grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to:

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