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**QUARANTINE IN A
FRONTLINE CITY: A
PERSONAL
DIMENSION**

INTRODUCTION

The choice of the article subject is not accidental to the authors. They represent Horlivka Institute for Foreign Languages, one of the 19 relocated educational institutions, which were forced from their educational buildings as the result of the military conflict in the Donbas (eastern Ukraine) and moved to the territory controlled by the Ukrainian authorities in 2014. Today, the Institute has some educational buildings at its disposal in the new place, but most of the Institute staff still have the status of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Hence, the relevance of the chosen topic is determined by scientific (to analyse the current situation in the Donbas and to outline the ways of its further development) and journalistic aspects (to convey an understanding of the inadmissibility of solving any

issues by military methods) and the subjective-objective perception of the events in 2014-2021 by the authors themselves.

The aim of the article is to analyse the situation in eastern Ukraine during the military conflict and its development in the pandemic conditions and perform the comparative analysis of the surveys results carried out in 2020 and 2021 to find out presence / absence of changes in ordinary citizens' assessments of the quarantine situation in the context of hostilities. The analysis is carried out on the background of government decisions and at the level of everyday life of ordinary citizens, which is characterized by the complex coexistence of neglected security rules, discomfort over mobility restrictions, distrust to the government and at the same time active practices of volunteering and charity. The study seeks to analyse the ongoing changes from the values of comfort and mobility to the growing concerns about – and demands for – public safety and new rules of health protection. At the same time, there is a growing need to increase the media literacy of a large part of the population as a guarantee of making balanced and relevant decisions.

The source basis of the research work includes documents of the governments on quarantine measures (bills, government decrees, decisions of local authorities) and the results of the surveys “Quarantine through the eyes of an average citizen”, which were conducted with an interval of one year: in the summer of 2020 and in the summer of 2021. The results of the surveys are presented in circular charts in the appendixes to the article.

The methodological basis of the research have become the latest works by the famous Israeli researcher Yuval Noah Harari, to wit, his article for the Financial Times about the coronavirus, in which the author raises the question of the possibility or impossibility of further globalization (Harari 2020), as well as the provisions from the speech of Stanford University professor, American philosopher Francis Fukuyama at the inaugural summit of the Crimean Platform in Kyiv on August 23, 2021. The famous scientist identified Ukraine's place as the main front of all countries against the growing threat of authoritarian-kleptocratic dictatorship. He described the current geopolitical situation as a competition between an authoritarian-kleptocratic system of government on the one hand and liberal democracy on the other one (Suspilne 2021).

THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE SITUATION AT THE DELIMITATION LINE

To understand the perception of an individual person of decisions on the introduction of quarantine, we give a brief analysis of the chronology and content of decisions taken at the governmental level.

Ukraine was among the first European countries to introduce quarantine measures. As early as March 12, 2020, the quarantine was imposed in educational institutions and some other measures were introduced to counter the spread of coronavirus infection COVID-19. On March 25, 2020, a state of emergency was imposed throughout Ukraine, and the quarantine was extended until April 24. The legal basis for these measures was the draft law adopted by the Verkhovna Rada on March 17, 2020, amending some legislative acts of Ukraine aimed at preventing the emergence and spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). In particular, the law defined new approaches to the organization of medical work, increased responsibility for the violation of quarantine norms, control over the prices of goods from the category of priority because of the situation, simplified some state procurement procedures, etc. (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine 2020). 2021 has become a period of wave-like intensification and mitigation of quarantine regulations. In September, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted amendments to Resolution № 1236, which establish new quarantine restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which directly depend on the number of vaccinated population (Ministry of Health of Ukraine 2021).

To trace the situation on the ground we should return to spring 2020. In Donetsk Oblast, according to the decision of the Regional State Administration, since March 21, 2020, the emergency state has been declared because of coronavirus (Hromadske 2020), and on March 28, entry and exit restrictions were imposed in Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts to counter the spread of coronavirus (Pravda 2020). But the most painful issue for the residents of the eastern regions was the operating of the checkpoints along the delimitation line. On March 7, 2020, there was introduced the measurement of body temperature of persons who cross the checkpoints from the so-called DPR (Donetsk People's Republic) and LPR (Luhansk People's Republic). This innovation has complicated the already lengthy verification procedure for citizens. On March 13, 2020, the

Ukrainian side imposed an entry ban on residents of temporarily uncontrolled territories and foreigners. The next day, mirror measures were introduced by the DPR and LPR, and on March 18, 2020, the latter announced the closure of all checkpoints due to the coronavirus epidemic in (LB.ua 2020). The situation has not changed as of the end of August 2021.

It should be noted that the introduction of quarantine led to increased difficulties in the region. Restrictions on the operating of checkpoints resulted in decrease of crossings along the delimitation line 56 (!) times (LB.ua 2020). The situation has not changed during the year and the tendency for the PDDL (Particular Districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts) to unblock the work of the entry-exit checkpoints in the near future is still absent today. On the Ukrainian side, since the autumn of 2020, all entry-exit checkpoints have been opened daily. But on the PDDL side, the checkpoint “Stanitsa Luganskaya” (Luhansk Oblast) is the only one working periodically. The checkpoint “Novotroitskoye” (Donetsk Oblast) works only twice a week (Mondays and Fridays), because on these days the so-called DPR representatives open their checkpoint “Olenivka” on this transport corridor. Up to 100 people a day are passed through the checkpoints according to the lists. To be included in these lists people have to wait for months. All the other checkpoints are closed by the PDDL authorities. Residents of the occupied part of Donetsk Oblast cannot use the checkpoint “Stanytsia Luhanska”, because the “border” between the DPR and the LPR has been closed for more than a year. In view of this, a departure from the occupied part of Donetsk Oblast to the territory controlled by Ukraine is possible through the territory of Russia.

Human rights activists are of the opinion that there are several reasons for not reopening the checkpoints by the authority of the PDDL. In addition to epidemiological measures, the closure of the checkpoints brings an economic benefit. Pensioners receiving Ukrainian pensions cannot travel to Ukrainian-controlled territory to cash in their bank cards. In this regard, the PDDL have expanded centers for cash transfers and their total monthly income has grown up to \$ 7 million due to the closed checkpoints (Ukrinform 2021).

The situation described clearly demonstrates that the pandemic has significantly worsened the communication on the delimitation

line, which, of course, negatively affected the state of citizens in the region.

QUARANTINE THROUGH THE EYES OF AN AVERAGE CITIZEN

Decisions made at all levels are aimed at average citizens forced to adapt to the conditions of their environment, to pass through their consciousness and emotions all these decisions and find a way to survive. That is why the authors of the article resorted to communication with ordinary citizens through questionnaires and present the comparative analysis of the results of the surveys carried out on the GOOGLE platform in June 2020 (188 respondents) and in June 2021 (197 respondents) in the city of Bakhmut (Donetsk Oblast), located 30 km from the front line, where a third of the population are internally displaced persons. The majority of respondents are the academic staff and students of Horlivka Institute for Foreign Languages and members of their families.

The 2020's age characteristic was the following: the bigger part of the surveyed represents the youth under 21 – 44.1%, age groups of 22 to 35 and from 35 to 60 have equal representation of 26.2%, senior age group, above 60, has not even reached 4%. There have not been substantial changes in 2021: young audience predominate again – 37.6%, the two following categories are very close in numbers – 27.9% and 33%. The part of the surveyed who are above 61 has reduced to 1.5%. The authors consider such data positively, that is the survey is conducted in the boundaries of the same age characteristics which increases the level of objectivity. The majority of young and middle aged among the surveyed is also considered a positive fact, because it is for them to solve the problems of reintegration of occupied at present part of Eastern territories.

Respondents were suggested to give answers to ten questions the major part of which concerned the realization of anti-epidemic measures and an attitude towards them. The questions were not changed because of the aim of tracking the context of the responses during first months since quarantine start and at present stage when there is a grievous statistic of the dead and when a certain social and individual experience is gained.

The first issue the authors turned their attention to was relatively small range of variations in the quantitative results of the responses

from 0.3% to 13.3% which, on the one hand, is possible to assess as a stability of social thought, but, on the other hand, the annual experience of existing under the quarantine conditions could change assessment and impression. Nevertheless, some of the specific changes in the responses demand some commentaries.

The authors of the article are currently participants in the Erasmus+ program “Academic Counteraction to Hybrid Threats”, so the survey starts with the question “Can the COVID-19 pandemic be viewed as a hybrid threat?” (Chart 1). The results show that 36.7% of respondents in 2020 and 45.2% in 2021 define Covid-19 as a hybrid threat while 43.1% (2020) and 35.5% (2021) of them could not answer this question. Such answers confirm the relevance of the Erasmus+ program and the need to explain to the population the possible accompanying threats, for example in the information or political sphere, in addition to the threat to health.

The introduction of quarantine was supported by 63.8% of respondents in 2020 and 67% in 2021 (Chart 2). Such significant support for the introduction of quarantine at the beginning of the pandemic and an increase in supporters of quarantine measures in a year indicate a high level of responsibility among the respondents for their own health and the health of others.

The majority of changes (by 10% and more) are traced in the responses to questions #3, #5, #6, #9. Thus, to the question “Who was the main burden of implementing quarantine measures laid on?” (Chart 3), 46.2% (contrary to 35.1% in 2020) of respondents said that “on the local authorities” and it gives us grounds to come to the conclusion that the respondents mainly rely on the Bahmut local authorities who have to work under the double threat. Moreover, more than half of the respondents (53.2% in 2020 and 61.4% in 2021) found anti-epidemic measures ineffective (Chart 4), which is a message for the state and local authorities to analyze the situation and find new decisions.

At the same time, the number of respondents, who assess the actions of authoritative structures in the conditions of the quarantine as too harsh, reduced more than twice, which testifies to the benefit of understanding the importance and necessity of such actions (18.1% in 2020 and 7.1% in 2021) (Chart 5). A 13.3% increase of respondents (44.7% in 2021 against 31.4% in 2020), who

characterized the level of safety measure observance by population as inadequate, looks very curious (Chart 6, 7). They also said that the majority of population did not observe the quarantine restrictions. Such response is a reason for sorrowful reflection, though it witnesses to an increase of demands among the population to the people around, to aspiration to notice violations and, let us hope, to react to them.

The number of responses “It is difficult to answer” generally declined, which, and most likely, is the result of the increase of information awareness level of the citizens and their desire to receive information and preferably from different sources. The question “Which channels of information about the epidemic did you use most often?” (Chart 8) proved the desire of a quarter of respondents (25.5% in 2020 and 24.9% in 2021) to use several sources to get the most reliable information, almost equally, about a third of the respondents, relied on the official sources (39.4% in 2020 and 33% in 2021) as well as social networks (34.6% and 37.6% respectively). In the last example the decrease of the official source usage draws attention.

The most positive result, in our opinion, must be the increase of respondents by 10.4% (80.9% in 2021 against 50.5% in 2020), who took to the restrictions of their private space with understanding of their necessity, especially to the restriction of free movement (Chart 9). Almost 61% of respondents soberly assessed the situation, and if to this number to add 35.5% of those who did not like the restrictions, but they had to endure them, then the prevailing majority of the respondents (96.4%) took to the quarantine measures and restrictions, which appeared consequently, with understanding and responsibility.

A rather ambiguous material for analysis was given by the answers in the rubric “another answer” (the authors retain orthography, language and style) – from complete denial of quarantine measures (*What measures are we talking about? I do not see them at all...*) to realistic awareness of annual experience (*I believe that in the beginning there were only words about the virus but later on, when everything became worse, people panicked... And now we are at the stage of acceptance that this can happen to anyone...*) 45.5% of people consider the COVID phenomenon in

2021 the next hybrid threat, and the others – genocide (*I don't know who started it, but ... it's genocide. There is overpopulation on the planet, that's why somebody decided somehow "to reduce" human population globally.*) by economic and political manipulation etc. There are recommendation responses (*It's possible to strengthen the quarantine norms (the distance between people obligatory hand washing free masks, which are changed every 3 hours), but not the strengthening of the quarantine*) and responses which call for responsibility and consciousness of people (*A person who reached 18 has to bear responsibility for themselves; Is there a purpose in the quarantine? – yes, but only in symbiosis with responsible actions of the humans; A person must decide for themselves whether they want to get infected*).

The authors consider a total answer to the last question (Chart 10), where prevailing majority (67% in 2020 and 73.1% in 2021) of the surveyed determined the aim of implementing quarantine measures as preservation of as many human lives as possible. We think that such an idea is very optimistic and that it was expressed by the residents of near-the-front zone additionally testifies in favor of life-asserting disposition among them.

Striving for peace has transformed into the main idea of social life not only in the East of the country but in the whole of Ukraine. According to the results of the survey in the limits of a social survey “Thoughts and opinions as to the military conflict on the territory of Ukraine” 54% of Ukrainians believe that the country’s plan of action of transition from the state of military conflict to peace must be devised now in order to be ready for the processes of deoccupation (Ukrinform 2021a). Significant importance of these processes in undertaken, as in the first years of military conflict, by the civil society, in particular National platform “Peace Dialogue and Safe Reintegration” is created as the ground for seeking consensus as to peaceful process in the East of Ukraine and for the development recommendations for government agencies. The Project provides for the coming to agreements with the help of expanding public participation in the peaceful process; providing government with proposals for creating corresponding politics. Including the problems of safe reintegration and national unity as well as ensuring social cognizance of these processes (UCIPR).

CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing the results of the survey, we pay attention to the following aspects:

Firstly, the question connected with hybrid threats was not accidentally included in the questionnaire as residents of the frontline city often hear and most already understand concepts such as “hybrid war” and “hybrid threat”, but the results of the survey showed that it is necessary to conduct extensive educational activities among the population to overcome the infectious threat and prevent manipulations in the media. The glossary on hybrid threats, in the creation of which the authors of this study participated, can also serve this purpose (Glossary).

Secondly, living in the frontline zone, where there are objective restrictions in the life of its population, the respondents showed a calm balanced attitude to new restrictions related to anti-epidemic measures. Unlike a large part of the population of other European countries and other Ukrainian regions, residents of the front zone did not organize any protests or mass disagreement with such measures.

Third, the vast majority of answers indicate that the greatest value for the inhabitants of this area is human life because the many respondents have already had the sad experience of losing their loved ones and acquaintances as a result of hostilities and they demonstrate a willingness to act responsibly in a pandemic time.

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Survey “Quarantine through the eyes of an average citizen”

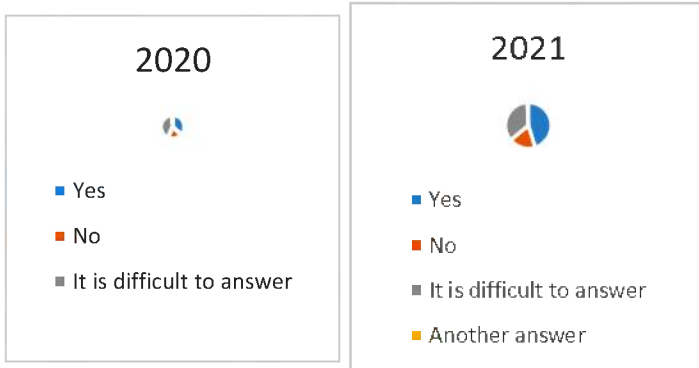


Chart 1: Can the COVID-19 pandemic be viewed as a hybrid threat?

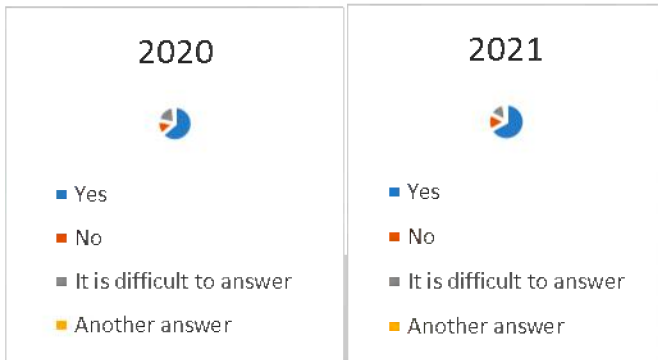


Chart 2: Do you support the introduction of the quarantine?



Chart 3: Who was the main burden of implementing quarantine measures laid on?



Chart 4: Were the anti-epidemic measures carried out by the authorities effective?



Chart 5: How do you assess the actions of the government under the conditions of quarantine?

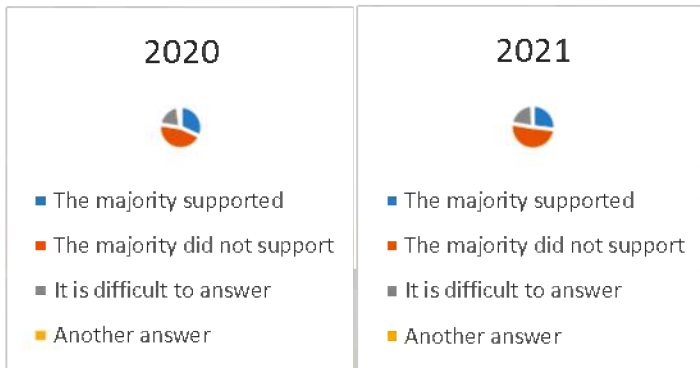


Chart 6: How did the population perceive the implementation of quarantine measures?

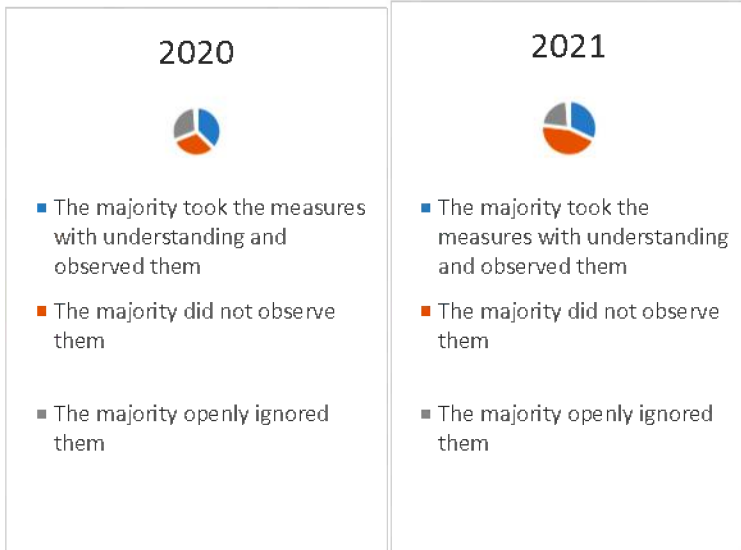


Chart 7: How would you assess the public compliance with quarantine security measures?

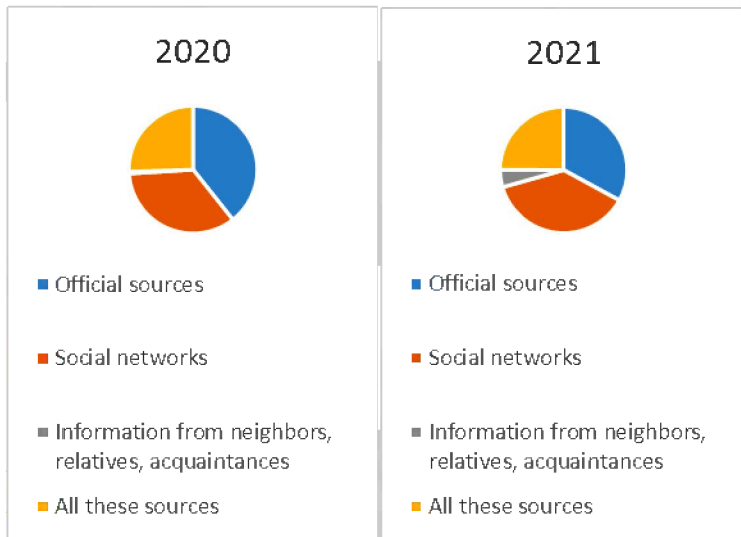


Chart 8: Which channels of information about the epidemic did you use most often?

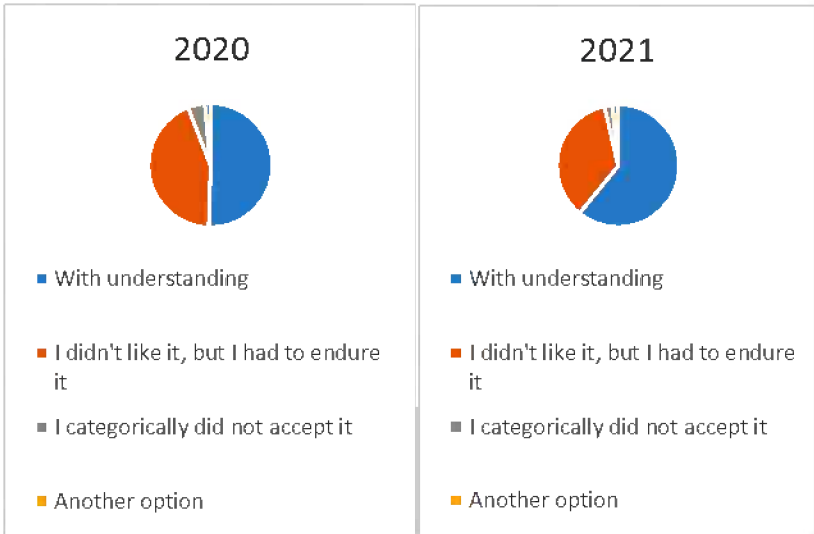


Chart 9: How did you react to the restriction on your personal liberty, in particular, freedom of movement during the quarantine?

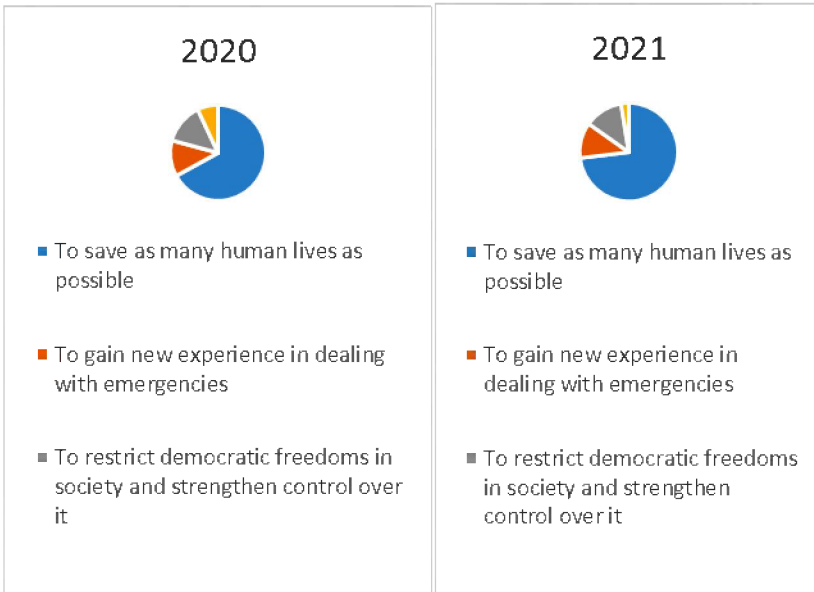


Chart 10: In your opinion, what is the main purpose of the quarantine measures?