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Developing Recommendations for Improving the Efficiency of Personnel Manning in the Armed Forces of Ukraine

Anatolii Barhylevych
Candidate of Military Sciences
General Inspector at the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine
The Staff of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine
03168, Povitrianykh Syl Avenue, 6, Kyiv, Ukraine
e-mail: A.barhilevych@mil.ua
ORCID: 0000-0002-4799-0908

Abstract. Manning the Armed Forces of Ukraine is one of the key aspects of the state's defence capability, particularly under the conditions of a protracted armed conflict. A reduction in mobilisation resources, socio-economic challenges, and a low level of trust in military structures complicate the process of attracting personnel. This article provides an analysis of the existing issues and possible solutions and aims to develop recommendations that may contribute to more effective manning of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in line with current challenges and NATO standards.

The research employs methods of systems analysis, structural-functional approach, and comparative analysis. It uses statistical data on personnel numbers, sociological surveys, and analytical reviews of international army manning practices. SWOT analysis methods were also applied to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current manning system.

The aim of the research is to identify systemic problems in the manning of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and to develop effective ways to improve mobilisation and contractual mechanisms. For this purpose, structural, statistical, and comparative analyses were applied, with a focus on the experience of partner countries.

The article analyses two main categories of sources for manning the Armed Forces of Ukraine: the mobilisation resource and contractual service. It outlines the key issues negatively affecting the manning process, including insufficient motivation, management problems, socio-economic factors, information challenges, and the low level of new recruits' training. A set of measures is proposed to improve manning efficiency, in particular: improving recruitment, digitalising military record-keeping processes, strengthening social protection for service members, and enhancing personnel training mechanisms.

The future research should focus on developing mechanisms for adapting the manning system to new security challenges, particularly under hybrid warfare conditions. An important aspect is the analysis of international experience with the aim of implementing best practices into the Ukrainian manning model. The impact of social factors on shaping a positive image of military service also requires dedicated attention.

The results of the research may be useful for military analysts, representatives of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, experts in military administration, as well as scholars working in the field of national security and military reform. The article may also be of interest to policymakers involved in shaping defence sector development strategies.

Keywords: Armed Forces of Ukraine, manning, ratio, recruiting, mobilisation resource, manning level.

Introduction

Manning the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AF of Ukraine) with military personnel is a key factor in ensuring national security and the state's defence capability, particularly under the conditions of armed conflict. The effectiveness of the mobilisation system, the level of citizens' motivation for military service, and the organisation of recruiting processes determine the combat effectiveness of military formations and their ability to accomplish operational tasks.

Following the launch of the full-scale aggression by the russian federation in 2022, Ukraine faced unprecedented challenges in the domain of force generation. High personnel losses, significant migration of the working-age population, socio-economic difficulties, and psychological factors have critically impacted the country's mobilisation potential. At the same time, the need is growing for highly skilled personnel capable of adapting to modern warfare conditions, including the use of advanced technologies, robotic systems, and cyber operations.

Despite the adoption of a number of reforms in the field of military service, including the introduction of new manning standards, many systemic problems remain. The lack of sufficient trust in Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Centres (TRC and SSC), inadequate civil-military cooperation, and limited social support for service personnel are factors that hinder the recruitment of new personnel.

The relevance of the research lies in the need to develop effective mechanisms for manning the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AF of Ukraine), taking into account current challenges and the experience of NATO member states. The article analyses the key issues that influence the process of recruiting personnel into the AF of Ukraine, identifies factors that reduce citizens' motivation to undergo military service, and offers practical recommendations to improve the effectiveness of manning.

The aim of the research is to identify systemic shortcomings in the mobilisation and contract-based enlistment system of the AF of Ukraine and to develop a comprehensive set of measures to improve personnel manning mechanisms. The research applies methods of structural analysis, statistical evaluation, and a comparative analysis of military models used by Ukraine's partner nations.

The results obtained may be used in the process of enhancing the state's military personnel policy, in forming a long-term strategy for manning the AF of Ukraine, and in developing recommendations for state authorities responsible for mobilisation and personnel management policy.

Literature Review

At present, many authors devote considerable attention to issues related to the manning of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AF of Ukraine) and to the experience of other countries in engaging citizens for military service [1–11]. However, the experience of recent years remains insufficiently explored, and there is a notable lack of innovative solutions to address the identified problems.

Methodological Framework

This research applies methods of systems analysis, a structural-functional approach, and comparative analysis. It utilises statistical data on personnel strength, sociological surveys, and analytical reviews of international practices in military manning. SWOT analysis was also employed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current personnel acquisition system.

Results

Currently, the sources of personnel for the AF of Ukraine are conventionally divided into two categories:

the first category (primary) consists of citizens liable for military service who are called up to the ranks of the AF of Ukraine during mobilisation in a special period, in accordance with the requirements of Ukrainian legislation and applicable regulatory acts;

the second category includes individuals who have voluntarily expressed willingness and signed a contract for military service in the AF of Ukraine (including foreign nationals).

The aforementioned categories differ in terms of numerical indicators, motivation to carry out combat (special) tasks, and levels of morale and psychological resilience

At the same time, both categories of individuals are directly or indirectly influenced by their overall level of trust in the Ukrainian government, the Defence Forces of Ukraine, and the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AF of Ukraine) in particular.

Specifically, declining trust in the processes taking place prior to conscription, during it, and throughout the preparation for and execution of combat (special) tasks has led to a reduction in the overall number of individuals in the second category (the so-called volunteers). Among the first category (provisionally understood as the broader segments of the population), doubts arise regarding the necessity of fulfilling the legally defined obligation. As a result, individuals seek ways to evade mobilisation.

The immediate causes of reluctance to serve in the AF of Ukraine and the declining level of public trust in the overall manning system of the AF of Ukraine can be attributed to the following: systemic and organisational shortcomings; information and communication challenges; socio-economic factors; training and rotation issues; psychological aspects; and management deficiencies (see Fig. 1).

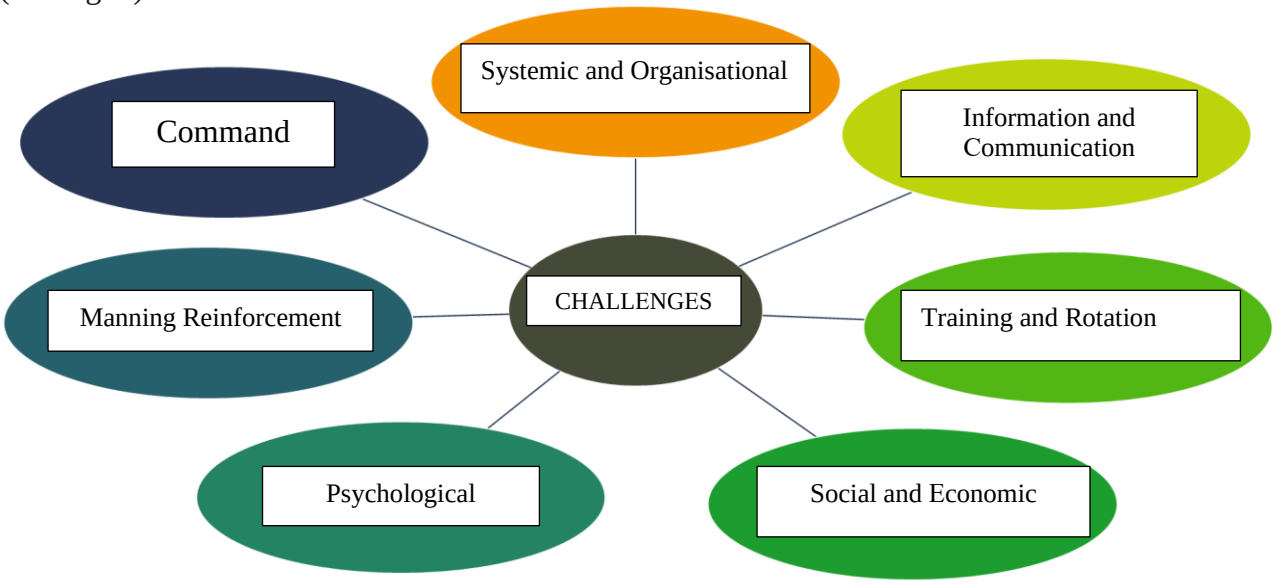


Figure 1. Main categories of issues in the organisation of manning within the AF of Ukraine

Systemic and organisational problems:

lack of proper motivation among citizens to fulfil their constitutional duty to defend the state, evasion of conscription for military service during mobilisation and special periods, and unwillingness to undertake contract-based military service;

low public trust in the functioning of Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Centres (TRC and SSC) due to numerous legal violations, as well as multiple cases of corruption involving personnel, particularly the leadership of certain TRC and SSCs, which have received widespread public attention in Ukrainian society;

failure of TRC and SSCs to meet planned targets for the conscription of individuals liable for military service during mobilisation and special periods, and to ensure their transfer to training military units (centres), higher military educational institutions, or training programmes at civilian higher education institutions, which hinders the replenishment of combat units to the required levels

using highly trained military personnel;

lack of adequate coordination between local authorities and TRC and SSCs, resulting in gaps in the organisation of notifications and ensuring the timely arrival of conscripts to TRC and SSCs.

Information and communication challenges:

insufficient public awareness regarding the opportunities and procedures for military service in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AF of Ukraine), and the failure to refute, or untimely refutation of, distorted and manipulative information concerning the activities of the AF of Ukraine in the mass media and on internet platforms;

dissemination in society of information about the training inadequate duration and quality for newly recruited personnel of the AF of Ukraine, among other concerns.

Social and economic factors:

low levels of financial remuneration for AF of Ukraine service members due to the devaluation of the national currency and general inflation caused by the war;

in the perception of the civilian population, the system of benefits and entitlements for service members and veterans is disproportionate to the actual risks associated with military service.

Training and rotation challenges:

insufficient duration and quality of training for newly arrived service members negatively affects their willingness to serve in combat units, which ultimately impacts the combat readiness of these subunits;

extremely limited, and often absent, opportunities for the rotation of service members deployed in combat mission areas.

Psychological aspects:

the psychological unpreparedness of civilians to take part in combat operations;

the negative influence of disinformation from the russian federation on the Ukrainian population’s attitude towards mobilisation.

Command challenges:

the practice of transferring service members to other subunits and military units for continued military service without their consent, as well as filling vacant positions that are in high demand at a given stage with personnel whose military occupational specialities and experience are not relevant.

Manning shortfalls:

unfounded refusals (due to overly strict selection criteria) by representatives of military units to accept trained personnel from Training Centres (Recruitment and Personnel Centres);

unfounded refusals by representatives of combat military units (subunits) to accept service members assigned (transferred) from non-combat military units (subunits) of different branches (armed services) of troops within the AF of Ukraine.

In addition, the general level of public trust in the mobilisation process and the willingness to defend Ukraine is influenced by a range of state-level processes that have gained public attention. These processes are associated, on the one hand, with unequal compliance with current legislation among different population groups and categories, and on the other hand, with a strong societal demand for equality before the law, integrity, and transparency in procedures. At the same time, these issues lie beyond the remit of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and cannot be resolved by them.

According to the analysis results of the identified problems, a number of proposals have been made to enhance the efficiency of manning the AF of Ukraine with personnel (see Fig. 2).

The work improvement at TRC and SSC (recruitment system):

taking the necessary measures to ensure that TRC and SSC meet the planned indicators for calling up human mobilisation resources and directing them to training military units (centres), higher military educational institutions, and higher education institutions with military programmes;

increasing the role of unit commanders in recruitment efforts to engage citizens for military service under contract;

scaling up the existing system of Recruitment Centres, which enjoy greater trust among the civilian population;

intensifying the work of recruitment teams of subordinate military units and Recruitment Centres of branches (armed services) of troops in attracting citizens to contract-based military service;

digitalising most military registration processes in TRC and SSC to ensure mobilisation call-up measures during a special period, and organising and monitoring the execution of these measures by operational command headquarters;

strengthening efforts to enlist on contract those who apply in person or through online remote recruitment platforms such as “Lobby X”, “Work.ua”, “Robota.ua”, “OLX Robota”;

improving cooperation between TRC and SSC personnel and the civilian population. Conducting a thorough selection of personnel for TRC and SSC and checking their integrity. Creating specialised online courses in business communication, integrity, and the research of ethical standards for civil servants (service members), and sending TRC and SSC military personnel (employees) to these courses in stages.

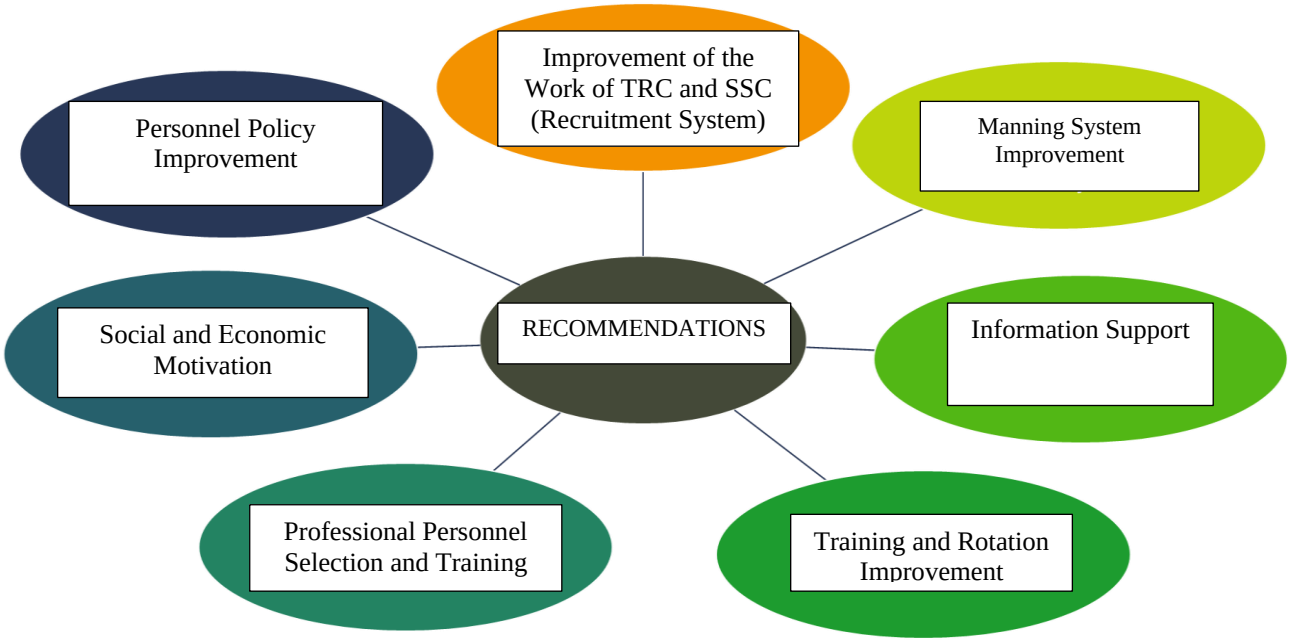


Figure 2. Key areas for enhancing the effectiveness of manning the Armed Forces of Ukraine with personnel

The manning system improvement:

ensuring the timely reception of trained military personnel from training centres (personnel training points) in the designated volumes; eliminating cases of unjustified refusals by representatives of military units to accept trained personnel. In the event of surplus trained resources, redistribution should be carried out to reinforce other combat military units;

eliminating cases of unjustified refusals by representatives of combat military units (subunits) to accept service members assigned (reassigned) for duty from non-combat military units (subunits);

organising personnel reinforcement of military units (subunits) to the levels and criteria defined in the order of the Commander-in-Chief of the AF of Ukraine dated 08.11.2024 No. 509/DSC, to achieve the “CAPABLE” rating;

granting the authority to officials responsible for enlisting contract personnel and assigning them to positions in accordance with the staffing nomenclature to conclude contracts with service-

eligible individuals selected for positions corresponding to their primary (related) Military Occupational Speciality (MOS) in military units not on the list of priority units, without requiring approval from the General Staff of the AF of Ukraine;

ensuring the fulfilment of training targets for personnel in accordance with the indicative volumes for the training of enlisted personnel, non-commissioned officers, and warrant officers;

ensuring priority in assigning personnel for training aimed at reinforcing the crews (teams) of combat military units.

Personnel policy improvement:

introduction of mandatory short-term specialised tactical-level military leadership courses for all platoon-company-battalion level commanders (for conscripts – prior to appointment to command positions; for current service members – during rotation or combat capability recovery);

conducting targeted scientific and practical research to assess the effectiveness of transferring service members to other subunits and military units without their consent (based on the experience of 2022–2024).

Information support:

implementation of measures to enhance citizens' motivation for military service, increase trust in the leadership of the AF of Ukraine, and improve the general perception of military service;

launching a nationwide advertising campaign to promote military service and foster its positive public image, along with initiatives to raise its prestige;

developing, at the state level, effective mechanisms for implementing national policy in the field of military-patriotic education, fostering active civic engagement and national and patriotic awareness among Ukrainian citizens;

conducting a continuous nationwide recruitment information campaign, presenting the opportunities, procedures, and prospects of military service in the AF of Ukraine. This campaign should target the broadest segments of the population, utilising all available state media and cooperating with private media outlets;

strengthening information space monitoring at all levels to detect any negative portrayal of the AF of Ukraine and ensuring timely and appropriate responses (rebuttals) to such content;

ensuring that up-to-date information on military service is accessible on the websites of recruitment centres, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the Ministry of Education and Science, and via call centres as interactive web assistants or messenger bots;

limiting or cutting off channels through which enemy disinformation enters the Ukrainian information space. If this cannot be prevented entirely, such information must be swiftly and professionally rebutted in the public domain by recognised and trusted speakers.

Social and economic motivation:

increasing the financial remuneration level for service members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AF of Ukraine) in order to reduce the impact of inflation on the welfare of active service personnel and their families, as well as to enhance the competitiveness of the AF of Ukraine on the Ukrainian labour market in the eyes of the civilian population, including citizens with higher education and knowledge of modern information technologies;

introducing preferential state life insurance schemes;

ensuring free medical treatment for service members and their family members;

ensuring free higher education for the children of service members at an institution of their choice;

ensuring that family members of a fallen service member get access to preferential mortgage schemes for housing purchase;

implementing free vocational and higher education for veterans;

creating a nationwide loyalty programme (price reductions) for service members, veterans, and their families on consumer goods;

focusing efforts on achieving the maximum level of implementation of previously declared benefits and guarantees, expanding their application, and introducing new ones.

Professional selection and personnel training:

introducing modern testing methodologies to assess the physical, psychological, and moral qualities of candidates;

implementing specialised programmes for the training of junior and mid-level commanders;

deepening cooperation with military departments at civilian higher education institutions for the training of officer personnel.

Training and rotation improvement:

clearly defining rotation periods to reduce personnel fatigue and introducing a mandatory rotation schedule;

organising adaptation courses following return from combat operations, including psychological support and retraining;

ensuring an effective system for the retraining of service members after prolonged deployments.

Additional measures:

introducing and conducting, through the efforts of Recruiting Centres, special short-term courses in psychological readiness for national defence. These courses should be held in higher education institutions, vocational and technical education institutions, senior classes of general secondary education institutions, as well as within bodies and institutions.

The implementation of most of the aforementioned measures requires relevant decisions not only by the leadership of the Armed Forces of Ukraine but also by the political leadership of the state, including amendments to current legislation and other regulatory acts.

Conclusion

Manning the Armed Forces of Ukraine is a key factor in ensuring national security. The main challenges causing personnel shortages include significant combat losses, the demographic crisis, low citizen motivation for military service, and shortcomings in mobilisation organisation. The emigration of conscription-age men, weak social support for service members and their families, as well as the lengthy training period for specialists, further complicate the manning process.

To address these issues, a comprehensive approach is proposed, which includes:

- improving the social support system for service members, particularly housing programmes, life insurance, medical care, and veteran rehabilitation;
- implementing an effective recruitment system, including digital platforms, social media, and online resources;
- enhancing the quality of training in military training centres by engaging international instructors, with a special focus on modern military technologies (cybersecurity, unmanned systems);
- expanding contractual military service programmes with more attractive conditions;
- improving the national resistance system and involving civilian specialists on a contractual basis;
- optimising the ratio between combat and support units in line with NATO countries' experience;
- establishing a transparent career progression system and an effective personnel selection mechanism.

Therefore, modernising the approach to manning the Armed Forces of Ukraine must be based on increased motivation, improved recruitment, and enhanced social support for service members. The proposed measures will contribute to improving the personnel situation, ensuring combat readiness, and strengthening the long-term resilience of troops.

Recommendations

The findings of the research may be useful for military analysts, representatives of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, specialists in the field of military administration, as well as for scholars dealing with national security and military reform. The article may also be of interest to policymakers involved in shaping the strategy for defence sector development.

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Розроблення рекомендацій щодо підвищення ефективності комплектування Збройних Сил України особовим складом

Анатолій Баргилевич
кандидат військових наук
Генеральний інспектор Міністерства оборони України
Апарат Міністерства оборони України
03168, проспект Повітряних Сил, 6, Київ, Україна
e-mail: A.barhilevych@mil.ua
ORCID: 0000-0002-4799-0908

Анотація. Комплектування Збройних Сил України є одним із ключових аспектів обороноздатності держави, особливо в умовах тривалого збройного конфлікту. Зменшення мобілізаційного ресурсу, соціально-економічні виклики та низький рівень довіри до військових структур ускладнюють процес залучення особового складу. Стаття містить аналіз наявних проблем та шляхи їх вирішення і спрямована на розроблення рекомендацій, які можуть сприяти більш ефективному комплектуванню Збройних Сил України відповідно до сучасних викликів і стандартів НАТО.

У дослідженні застосовано методи системного аналізу, структурно-функціонального підходу та порівняльного аналізу. Використано статистичні дані щодо чисельності особового складу, соціологічні опитування та аналітичні огляди міжнародного досвіду комплектування армій. Застосовано також методи SWOT-аналізу для оцінювання сильних і слабких сторін наявної системи комплектування.

Мета дослідження полягає у виявленні системних проблем комплектування Збройних Сил України та розробленні ефективних шляхів удосконалення мобілізаційних і контрактних механізмів. Для цього застосовано структурний, статистичний та порівняльний аналіз із акцентом на досвід країн-партнерів.

У статті проаналізовано дві основні категорії джерел комплектування Збройних Сил України: мобілізаційний ресурс та контрактну службу. Виокремлено ключові проблеми, що негативно впливають на процес комплектування, серед яких: недостатня мотивація, проблеми управління, соціально-економічні фактори, інформаційні виклики та низький рівень підготовки новобранців. Запропоновано комплекс заходів для підвищення ефективності комплектування, зокрема покращення рекрутингу, цифровізація процесів військового обліку, підвищення соціального захисту військовослужбовців та удосконалення механізмів підготовки особового складу.

Майбутні дослідження мають бути зосереджені на розробленні механізмів адаптації системи комплектування до нових безпекових викликів, зокрема в умовах гібридної війни. Важливим аспектом є також аналіз міжнародного досвіду з метою імплементації найкращих практик до української моделі комплектування. Окремої уваги потребує дослідження впливу соціальних факторів на формування позитивного іміджу військової служби.

Результати дослідження можуть бути корисними для військових аналітиків, представників Міністерства оборони України, фахівців у сфері військового управління, а також для науковців, які займаються питаннями національної безпеки та військової реформи. Також стаття може зацікавити політиків, які формують стратегію розвитку оборонного сектору.

Ключові слова: Збройні Сили України, комплектування, співвідношення, рекрутинг, мобілізаційний ресурс, рівень укомплектованості.