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Educational Activities of the National Defence University of Ukraine in the context of countering the armed aggression of the Russian Federation

Resume. The education and training of qualified officers in the context of war and repulsing aggression is crucial for building a capability to operate in combat conditions, given the changing nature of war and rapid developments. There are restrictions imposed due to many factors and the format of education: it is necessary to train as many specialists as possible in the shortest possible time, ensuring the highest quality; it is necessary to actually transform education in accordance with the requirements of modernity in order to educate leaders capable of making non-standard winning decisions. In addition, in line with established Euro-Atlantic approaches and Ukraine's aspirations for membership in the Alliance, there is a need to implement NATO standards and approaches in education as well.

Key words: military education, repelling armed aggression, transformation of military education.

Statement of the problem. The aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine in the twenty-first century can be described as a series of events that had a direct or indirect impact. The events around Tuzla Island in 2003, the gas war and the “occupation” of Ukraine’s governmental structures by pro-Russian forces, etc. This is just a small list of aggressive actions aimed at further colonizing Ukraine under the slogan of restoring the Soviet Union. The kremlin leader states that its collapse was “the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the twentieth century”.

In 2014, the hybrid aggressive military actions of the Russian Federation led to the temporary occupation of Crimea and the de facto occupation of certain territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, followed by the formation of fake “republics” controlled by the aggressor. This situation has put the issue of Ukraine’s security on the agenda.

The violation of the Budapest Memorandum on Ukraine’s security by one of its signatories and guarantors has put Ukraine between two security poles in Europe. On the one side, the country is an aggressor, an heir to the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact of the Soviet camp. On the other side is NATO, an international intergovernmental organization, a military and political alliance of North American and European states that ensures the freedom and security of its member nations.

Thus, Ukraine faced a choice about its place in the future security environment, and the people of Ukraine made their choice.

The enshrining in the Constitution of Ukraine of the irreversibility of Ukraine’s European and Euro-Atlantic course and the strategic course of the state to acquire full membership in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was crucial in shaping Ukraine’s role and place in the future security environment of Europe.

The Anti-Terrorist Operation and the Joint Forces Operation in 2014-2022 required consolidation of all components of the Ukrainian security and defence sector, including education and training of military personnel.

The need to master new forms and methods of warfare, the gradual introduction of NATO-standard military decision-making procedures in the activities of military formations, and the need to maintain a significant number of military formations put the issue of changing approaches to education and training defence personnel on the agenda.

The invasion of the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022, changed the format of the Joint Forces Operation with the involvement of a limited number of defence forces. Repelling direct aggression requires the full-scale use of all components of Ukraine’s security and defence sector and comprehensive defence to destroy the aggressor’s intentions, restore territorial integrity and defend Ukraine’s independence.

The scale and intensity of hostilities leads to the need to replenish losses and create new military formations, which requires intensified training of human reserves.

Material and technical assistance from partners leads to changes and a gradual transition to NATO standards in military tactics, processes and procedures for planning operations, intelligence, joint fire support, logistics, command and control of troops (forces), and strategies for achieving goals in confronting the aggressor.

All of this increases the relevance of professionalization of military education and will require changes in the training of military personnel, which together leads to the development of the military education system, which is an important component of the Ukrainian education system in addressing the tasks of preparing the population for national resistance and comprehensive defence.

The system of military education is on the way to professionalizing military education and transitioning to the principles, standards and methods of training adopted by NATO nations [1].

The functioning of the military education system in the context of repulsing the aggression of the Russian Federation poses real threats to the activities of military educational institutions (MEIs). MEIs are under the threat of attacks by the aggressor country with land, air or sea-based missiles.

The aggressor expects the destruction of experienced military personnel, including students, and the destruction of military educational infrastructure as the predicted results of such strikes.

At the same time, the growing need for training military personnel leads to an increase in the number of personnel on the territory of MEIs, which significantly increases the likelihood that MEIs will become a target of the aggressor.

Thus, the organization of educational activities in the context of repelling the armed aggression has become relevant since its beginning.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In recent years, a sufficient number of scientific studies and publications have been devoted to the transformation and development of military education in Ukraine.

The researchers study the security environment [2], directions and prospects of reforming military education [3], quality assurance in military education [4, 5], information support [6], ways of Euro-Atlantic integration [7, 8], modelling in military education and training [9], public administration of the military education system [10], analyze military

education in the context of repelling the aggression of the Russian Federation [11, 12], etc.

At the same time, many studies are focused on the content of military education, with much attention paid to the training of officers in higher education. The focus is on education, not its organisation. The peculiarities of organising the educational activities of a military educational institution in the context of countering armed aggression remain outside the scope of research.

The purpose of the article. To analyse the peculiarities of organising educational activities in the context of repulsing the armed aggression of the Russian Federation based on the experience of the National Defence University of Ukraine.

Summary of the main material. Ukraine is fighting for its right to exist, defending not only its independence but also the entire democratic world. Despite the extremely difficult period, the University managed to maintain the training of military leaders for the defence sector.

Timely meeting the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the Defence Forces for highly qualified, trained military professionals in 2022-2024 required prompt changes to the educational process, including the improvement of training programmes for students at all levels of military education. This period convincingly confirms the relevance and expediency of the important elements (or components) of the hierarchy of goals chosen by the National Defence University of Ukraine (NDUU): “The University is a hub (centre) of strategic thinking in the areas of national security and defence of the state, a leader in the provision of relevant educational and scientific services and a competitive innovative educational and scientific institution in the global market of services in the field of international security and defence” [13].

This is enshrined in the Development Strategy of the National Defence University of Ukraine for the period up to 2030 [14]. The University's mission is to “meet the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other components of the security and defence sector of Ukraine for leaders with a broad intellectual horizon by providing high-quality educational services, developing high-quality scientific and scientific-analytical products based on the results of fundamental and applied research in the field of national security and defence” [14].

Guided by the vision and mission and considering changes in the security environment and existing challenges and threats, the institution strives to reach a level at which it will be:

the choice of customers (components of the security and defence sector of Ukraine and other

interested institutions) for the provision of education, training and professional development in the field of national security and defence of Ukraine, as well as civil servants;

a recognised military education institution that develops the skills of students for self-education, expanding their intellectual horizons and capabilities, provides quality education in the field of national security and defence to governmental and non-governmental structures, implements and coordinates interagency cooperation, and is active in international activities due to its holistic and comprehensive approach to security and defence; and a leading expert institution in Ukraine, the European region and the world in the fields of national security and defence, military strategy and defence planning, and professional military education.

In the context of constant changes in the global security environment and the ongoing armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the NDUU proactively and flexibly responds to changes in the global and national “agenda”. A profound rethinking of all aspects of the University’s activities in the context of the implementation of the state policy in the field of defence and Ukraine’s course towards membership in the Euro-Atlantic community has led to a change in the priorities of the university’s educational and scientific environment, the use of modern effective management solutions based on the ideas of intellectual leadership.

In recent years, the NDUU has been a modern and leading educational hub that has been supporting these changes and providing assistance, including methodological support, to other tactical-level military educational institutions to prevent a decline in the quality of training of military specialists with higher military education.

The NDUU priorities are:

conducting educational activities that ensure the training of military specialists of the appropriate degrees and levels of military education in certain specialities and educational programmes (specialisations);

conducting scientific, scientific-technical and innovative activities through scientific research and ensuring creative activity of the participants of the educational process;

fulfilment of the state order for the training of military specialists, international agreements for the training of military specialists of foreign countries;

training of officers and civil servants for postgraduate education beyond the state order

within the licence volume at the expense of individuals and legal entities;

retraining and advanced training of personnel for the security and defence sector and the armed forces of foreign countries;

retraining and advanced training of civil servants on military security and defence of the state for the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, other state authorities, security and defence structures, and local self-government bodies;

military training of Ukrainian citizens under the reserve officer programme;

establishing international relations and conducting international activities in the field of national security and defence;

participation in scientific support of the formation and implementation of state policy in the field of national security and defence, defence reform measures, military education and science of the state, dissemination of scientific knowledge in the defence sector;

participation in the development of draft laws of Ukraine, acts of the President of Ukraine and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, international treaties, orders of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine (General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine) and conducting their scientific and methodological expertise [15]. These priority tasks are set out in the University’s Charter.

In connection with the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the Presidential Decree No. 64/2022 “On the introduction of martial law in Ukraine” was signed on 24 February 2022 [16].

Pursuant to this decree, further training of higher education students of all levels at the University was carried out in accordance with the relevant regulations. Early graduation of higher education students and transfer from full-time to part-time education was carried out (in order to assign them to the army to perform combat missions to repel the armed aggression of the Russian Federation). The staff of the University is still involved in tasks accomplishment within the military commands of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and branches of the armed forces, defence sectors and military units.

The university's mobile groups, individual academic and research staff provide education and training to government bodies of all levels, military units and subdivisions, individual servicemen and women of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, including the Territorial Defence, the National Guard of Ukraine, and executive authorities. Relevant training was conducted at the tactical, operational and strategic levels with a focus on narrow-profile specialised professional

training of officers and enlisted personnel, and on the interaction of military formations belonging to different agencies.

The university's specialists conducted training and assistance to military and civilian formations of the state, held classes on operational planning, the use of military units and subunits, formations and associations of branches of the armed forces and types of armed forces in tactical, firearms, engineering training, and tactical medicine.

In turn, the educational process has been adjusted to implement the curricula and training programmes under martial law.

Considering the situation and the requirement for training, it was decided to resume education in the new academic year (September 2022). The main challenge of resuming the educational process was to ensure the security and safety of personnel, so the experience of organising the educational process, which was tested during the “introduction of restrictive anti-epidemic measures to prevent the spread of acute respiratory disease COVID-19 caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 in Ukraine”, was actively used. The distance learning platform is actively used to conduct online classes on non-sensitive topics. Classes on sensitive topics are held in safe places in compliance with safety standards, in many cases outside the university.

In addition, the circumstances require even greater changes, so the University is reforming and introducing new approaches, introducing a system of professional military education synchronised with the approaches and standards existing in NATO member states. This trend is enshrined, among other things, in the Concept of Transformation of the Military Education System, which was approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine [17].

In the context of the requirements of this Concept, an important place in the university's activities is given to improving the educational process of training military specialists, as well as the experience of combat operations by the state defence forces to repel the large-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation.

The main attention is paid to the development of the university's capabilities to develop the system of professional military education.

For all categories of students, the content of education is updated, planning and decision-making procedures are introduced into the programmes in accordance with NATO standards, the latest experience of warfare, and an important experience of NDUU is the development of a

separate training course on war lessons learned [18].

The study and implementation of experience is necessary to ‘improve the efficiency of activities aimed at organising the implementation of measures for the training, comprehensive support, development, employment and management of troops (forces) of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other components of the defence forces for the defence of the state, protection of its sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability’ [19]. The same approaches are laid down in NATO's updated guidelines on lessons learned [20].

In this context, the focus of the university's activities is to provide joint centralised training for officers at the operational and strategic levels of the defence forces, to constantly update the content of military education to ensure that military specialists acquire interoperability based on NATO approaches and modern warfare experience.

In addition to raising the level of military personnel training, in the long term this will allow for accreditation of courses in accordance with NATO requirements and create conditions for mutual recognition of certificates obtained in military educational institutions of both NATO member states and Ukraine. This is important, given the interest of partner countries in obtaining education in Ukraine. In this regard, it is important to implement the NATO Bi-SC “Education and Individual Training Directive (E&ITD) 075-007” to ensure that professional military education is compatible with the requirements of the Alliance [21].

Along with the implementation of educational and scientific activities, representatives of the university have performed and continue to perform combat (service) tasks in military command and control bodies in order to gain combat experience in the use and management of troops (forces) or are trained in the troops in relevant positions.

Based on the training needs, the curricula are being revised and updated, new modules and topics are being introduced in professional military education courses and Master's degree programs, and new courses are being developed in response to the needs of the time. Methodological (pedagogical) experiments aimed at improving the educational process have been launched, with much attention paid to feedback from students to make timely adjustments to the content of training.

The NDUU develops the material and technical base and infrastructure to improve the

efficiency of the educational process. Preference is given to the development of a modern classroom infrastructure with an emphasis on the introduction of advanced information technologies as an element of support for the educational process and the technical base for all types of practices related to the development of competencies in management decision-making, operational planning, combat planning, management of military units (formations) in combat (operations); development of critical thinking, leadership skills; studying new aspects of future wars, working on the professionalisation of military education [22].

An important aspect is the participation of academic staff in the training of brigade headquarters with their subsequent support (supervision) to provide the necessary methodological assistance.

In addition, representatives of the university are sent on a rotational basis to the J7 of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, where they participate in documenting the combat experience of the defence forces.

There are many students who have taken part in important combat operations and have unique experience, so we actively use such a method as peer-to-peer training through the actual exchange of information between them.

All these measures, including training of brigade headquarters, rotational deployments to the areas of operations, and the receipt of newsletters containing information on generalised experience, are necessary for its rapid implementation in educational programmes at all levels of training.

Therefore, the functioning of a military educational institution in the context of repelling the armed aggression of the Russian Federation increases the scope of educational activities due to the low differences from the functioning in peacetime, in particular:

increase in the volume of military personnel training due to the growing needs for education and training personnel in the security and defence sector of Ukraine;

the need for flexibility and adaptability of educational programmes to quickly implement the lessons learned during hostilities, mastering the latest technologies, new weapons and tactics of their use;

the objective need to develop students' leadership skills, psychological stability, physical endurance, survival on the battlefield, and moral readiness to perform the tasks of defending Ukraine in military education;

the requirement to train military personnel in critical military specialities in a shorter timeframe;

the importance of intensification of training, its practical orientation and the closeness of training conditions to real combat conditions;

the need for military education institutions to perform additional tasks not related to educational activities;

the requirement for mobility of military education institutions, redeployment or evacuation from areas of intense combat operations, protection from enemy attacks;

the relevance of comprehensive provision of the educational process (simulators, weapons, etc.) and provision of personnel with weapons, personal protective equipment and other property.

Conclusions. Despite the existing challenges and threats, the University carries out systematic work to develop and update (modernise) educational programmes for military specialists, increasing the share of studying those issues that are necessary today to win. The need to implement the lessons of war is considered as an essential requirement for the quality organisation of the educational process.

Recommendations. Attention should be paid to the organisation of the educational process in conditions of constant danger, possible problems with power supply and Internet connection, as well as to the conduct of educational activities in accordance with the norms of current national legislation and the implementation of Euro-Atlantic approaches and standards.

Areas for further research. Further research is needed on the introduction of combat experience into the educational process, as well as on the alignment of the national legal framework with NATO approaches.

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Освітня діяльність Національного університету оборони України в умовах відбиття збройної агресії російської федерації

Анотація

Освіта та підготовка кваліфікованих офіцерів в умовах війни та відбиття агресії має вирішальне значення для розбудови спроможності діяти в бойових умовах, враховуючи мінливий характер війни та стрімкий розвиток подій. Існують обмеження, зумовлені багатьма факторами та форматом освіти: необхідно підготувати якомога більше фахівців у найкоротші терміни, забезпечивши найвищу якість; необхідно фактично трансформувати освіту відповідно до вимог сучасності, щоб виховувати лідерів, здатних приймати нестандартні переможні рішення. Крім того, відповідно до усталених євроатлантичних підходів та прагнень України до членства в Альянсі, існує потреба у впровадженні стандартів та підходів НАТО й в освіті.

Крім того, необхідність освоєння нових форм і способів ведення бойових дій, поступове впровадження в діяльність військових формувань стандартних для НАТО процедур прийняття військових рішень, а також потреба в утриманні значної кількості військових формувань ставлять на порядок денний питання зміни підходів до навчання та підготовки військовослужбовців.

Протягом останніх років Національний університет оборони України став сучасним та провідним освітнім хабом, який підтримує зміни та надає допомогу, в тому числі методичну, іншим військовим навчальним закладам тактичного рівня з метою недопущення зниження якості підготовки військових фахівців з вищою військовою освітою.

Досвід організації освітнього процесу в умовах відбиття збройної агресії є унікальним та важливим. Фактично необхідно виконати комплексне завдання: освітній процес, відбиття збройної агресії, трансформація системи військової освіти та впровадження отриманого досвіду бойових дій для забезпечення підготовки кваліфікованих кадрів.

Ключові слова: військова освіта; відбиття збройної агресії; трансформація військової освіти.