

Protection of Cultural Heritage in an Armed Conflict. What Poland can Learn from Ukraine?

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Abstract

The protection of cultural heritage is an important element of a country's cultural policy. The article describes the nature of threats posed by armed conflicts to cultural heritage and the destruction of Ukrainian cultural property by Russian aggression in 2022. The article aims at discussion of the consequences of Russia's deliberate destruction of Ukrainian cultural heritage and offers an interdisciplinary insight into protection of cultural heritage during the contemporary armed conflict. These initial observations from Russian aggression against Ukraine serve as a starting point for a discussion on challenges related to the protection of cultural heritage during a potential armed conflict in Central and Eastern Europe. Drawing on practical observations from Ukraine, the article calls for improvements to the protection of cultural heritage in Poland.

KEY WORDS: *cultural heritage, protection of cultural heritage, Ukraine, war, Poland.*

1. Introduction

The war in Ukraine has highlighted the problems related to the protection of cultural heritage in the contemporary armed conflict. Ukrainians must not only defend their country, but also protect their cultural heritage, which is important for their national identity. A key element of national power is the morale of a nation, rooted in its culture, historical experience and social structure. As the war in Ukraine has shown, cultural heritage may facilitate mobilization of the society for defence and resistance. Thus, despite international law protecting cultural heritage during wartime, Ukrainian cultural property became targets for Russian aggressors. War in Ukraine provides numerous examples of deliberate actions aimed at physical destruction of Ukrainian cultural heritage or symbolic aggression against them. Extensive historic and cultural backgrounds support competing strategic narratives of Russia and Ukraine. Cultural heritage becomes another battleground for influence and information operations, hybrid activities and conventional kinetic warfare. War in Ukraine shows that contemporary armed conflicts are becoming more and more multidimensional and complex. Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of the phenomena related to them is required. Consequently, there is a need for a better definition, assessment and approach to counter threats of deliberate destruction of cultural heritage. The protection of cultural heritage has been considered as an important element of a country's cultural policy and activities of the international community. Currently, publicly available information provided by the Ukrainian and Polish governments and international institutions can be used to strengthen evidence and present tangible data on the protection of cultural heritage during armed conflict.

War is a radical 'checking' moment that only a society entangled in an armed conflict can experience. For several decades, Poles have not faced a challenge of this scale as the conflict in Ukraine lasting from February 24, 2022. Once again in Polish history, it turned out that when thinking about peace, one must adhere to the Old Latin adage: "if you want peace, get ready for war" (*Si vis pacem, para bellum*). In fact, the war in Ukraine has been waged since 2014, but it is only for nearly half a year now that Poles, as a society, have been convinced that it may threaten Poland. The war in Ukraine is also a time of trial for leaders, institutions and organizations (state, social, local). It has been testing their empathy, authenticity, leadership skills and proper functioning. Just as the pandemic triggered hopes for systemic changes, the war carries out a specific vivisection of various structures responsible for crisis management. At the same time, the war outlines new challenges that are meant to improve or replace the "old" solutions.

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2. Cultural heritage and armed conflict

The unfavorable changes in the security environment of the Eastern European area, initiated after the aggression against Georgia in 2008, have resulted in a renewed topicality of problems related to protection of cultural heritage during the armed conflict. Current aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which began with the annexation of Crimea in 2014 added some sense of urgency to the public discourse on the topic. To discuss the problems related to protection of cultural heritage, it needs to be understood that an interdisciplinary approach is needed. It is therefore necessary to familiarize the reader with the concept of cultural heritage, and appreciate value of monuments of history and culture, known as cultural heritage, for a state and a society.

The concept of “culture” is one of the most important and at the same time the most indefinite terms. It is variously defined and associated with every human activity. It inspires creative searches of scientists representing many fields of knowledge, starting with philosophers and sociologists, and ending with historians, archaeologists, political scientists and media scholars. It should be mentioned that the word “culture” comes from the Latin *cultus*, which means: cultivating, nurturing, and initially it referred only to farming - *cultura agri* [27]. Culture is peculiar to every human being, common to all people and has accompanied us since the dawn of time. It concerns everything that man has created by the effort of his will, reason and work. Both in the mental and artistic sense as well as in the technical sense. An American anthropologist Edward T. Hall claimed that culture intensely influences the human psyche, *which in turn determines the way people look at the world around them, their political views, the way of making decisions, the value system, the organization of their private life and, finally, the way they think* [3]. Moreover, the most important bond of culture, according to, for example, L. Dyczewski, are values. He claims that *culture is a world of values that guide human desires and actions, and are the basis for evaluating everything that a person thinks, wants and does* [2]. This leads to the conclusion that the relationships between culture and values make it impossible to get to know culture while isolating the sphere of values. Conversely, one cannot analyze the value of a given community (nation) in isolation from its culture. In addition, the analysis of the literature on the subject confirms the belief that communication is necessary for the creation of culture. Such communication may be in different forms dependent on the conditions prevailing in a given community. In relation to the described issues, culture, both material and spiritual, is one of the most important components of a human (community) identity. Preservation cultural heritage is an important factor that allows a given individual to feel like a member of a specific community (nation). Cultural heritage is a specific testimony of memory. It contains both material and non-material components, which form various manifestations of human creativity and expression.

Cultural heritage as an issue of normative regulation can be characterized in a multifaceted way. It can be presented by comparing both to the sphere of the law in force in a given country and to the legal norms in force in another country (alliance). In a broader sense, legal issues of protection and management of cultural heritage are determined by separate international bilateral agreements. However, the legal basis for the international protection of cultural property is the Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, signed in the Hague on 14 May 1954[11]. The Hague Convention defines cultural goods as primarily movable or immovable goods, which are of great importance to the cultural heritage of a nation. According to the convention these may be monuments of architecture, art or history, works of art and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological importance, as well as scientific value or buildings, which primary purpose is the storage or display of movable cultural property. The convention protects also shelters that are used for the purpose of storage of cultural goods in the event of war. Considerations on legal norms, with the changing system of law making and application in the state, are issues that require separate analyzes and should constitute a special source of knowledge for modern public administration. Moreover, this knowledge is required not only of the administration responsible for the protection of cultural heritage, but also for the community of professionals dealing with protection of cultural heritage, i.e. entities predisposed to care for monuments, museums, libraries etc.

The value of cultural heritage is multi-dimensional and can be measured on many scales. Some of the values of cultural heritage are universal, transcendent, objective and unconditional [20]. For example, the objective value of cultural heritage is therefore its existence and its diversity. Other objective values of cultural heritage are, for example, cognitive values, thanks to which cultural objects also function as historical evidence, making it possible to learn about the relatively distant past. A separate group describing value of cultural heritage is made up of relative values depending on the specific social or cultural context of the recipient. Such a relative value is, for example, a symbolic-associative value that allows one to gather around a specific ethnic group or evoke specific patriotic feelings. Another group are issues related to environmental protection, especially with regard to the properties of certain goods or resources, such as, for example, water or unique vegetation. The analysis of various aspects of a very complex problem of cultural heritage comes down to the conclusion that heritage must be considered as a common good. In that sense, every citizen (member of a given community) should have an equal access to these goods, and thus feel responsible for their protection. Moreover, the problems of the protection of cultural heritage

cannot be solved by any legal regulations alone. The key to success is the local environment and community, which has unlimited access to the use of its tangible and intangible values. Hence, heritage is not a state, but a constantly occurring process influenced by the environment and community and it may change over time. Traditionally, cultural heritage has been seen as artifacts of material culture. At the beginning of the 21st century understanding of cultural heritage expanded to include intangible heritage. This intangible heritage, as understood nowadays, includes customs, rituals, legends, dance, traditional knowledge. It covers also forms of presentation and expression, knowledge and instruments, objects, human products and related cultural spaces that communities and individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage [21]. Cultural heritage is recognized as a response to the need for antiquity. It is a category of description of cultural, social and natural reality. It refers to analytical concepts used by existing sciences and draws from them. These terms are: history, monument, tradition and folklore, memory and places of remembrance, museum facility, cultural landscape with elements of culture, fauna and flora as well as geography, resources and cultural goods. Heritage combines these concepts and grows into a very rich symbolic form through which reality is described and explained both at the level of individuals and communities (nations, states) [8]. To summarize this stage of considerations, it should be concluded that both material and non-material resources constitute the foundation for shaping both the size of the state and its strength (power). This thesis is confirmed by the analysis of the literature on the subject. While delineating the elements that build the power of a given state, social power should be taken into account along with economic and military aspects. Social power may include the fighting spirit of the nation, i.e. the quality of leadership, the unity and cohesiveness of the nation, awakened respect and friendship as well as spiritual (morale) and intellectual abilities [17]. The unity and cohesiveness of a nation as well as moral abilities mentioned by experts derive directly from the cultural heritage of a given nation (community). An issue that raises no doubts and at the same time finds confirmation in the current resistance of the Ukrainian nation is the use of spiritual elements related to the nation's morale. These are non-tangible elements of national power, so they cannot replace, for example, military power. However, cultural heritage may play an important role in enhancing the effectiveness of employment of material components of defence capabilities. It may also contribute to the maximization of the will to fight and survive. In relation to these considerations, an element inherent in any armed conflict is the population residing in a given territory, and one cannot consider it only quantitatively, but also qualitatively.

Numerous authors have stressed value of cultural heritage in international relations. The words of J.G. Stoessinger: power in international relations is the ability of a state to use its tangible and intangible resources in a way that will influence the behavior of other states [18]. Therefore, from the point of view of the discussed problems, cultural (national) heritage can ensure the ability of a given organism to use its material and non-material resources in order to create conditions ensuring military domination in the moral and mental sphere. Moreover, an effective system of promoting cultural heritage adds value to the state's tangible and intangible resources. It also allows creating an effective component of the deterrent system against a potential aggressor. All these conditions can be used in times of peace, crisis or war. According to experts, the effects of actively demonstrating one's own cultural heritage is also important. This is primarily to increase the credibility of deterrence and strengthen message to the potential opponent about the nation's determination to defend its history, tradition and values. Cultural heritage may be considered as an expression of the history of the places and people who live in these places. Cultural heritage as an "inheritance" from the ancestors is important because it determines the national identity. This identity in turn facilitates the integration of the local community and is an impulse to mobilize it in defense of one's own values. Therefore, when building a state's defense system, its cultural heritage should be taken into account, which is a kind of bond between the development of the socio-cultural and economic spheres and the need to defend one's (state) values.

As previously emphasized, the legal system obviously plays a key role in the process of identifying cultural heritage. Usually, however, changes in the law do not keep up with the changes in conservation thought and the actual processes of socio-cultural expansion of the scope of cultural heritage. In addition, it should be remembered that the cultural heritage also includes objects that have not yet been officially categorized for protection and function in the so-called "living" socio-cultural system. It should be clearly emphasized that heritage areas defined in this type of approach evolve in meaning, depending on what is defined as heritage for a given community. Nowadays, the discussions on cultural heritage, most often focus on material culture as remnants of long-dead ancestors. However, it is rarely realized that culture is what simply penetrates deep into the human soul and blends with it every day. Each day brings new challenges. This is particularly evident when, for example, Ukraine's Independence Day (August 24) is celebrated across the globe and at the same time six months of the resistance of Ukrainian society to the Russian aggressor pass. Each day brings new challenges to the cultural heritage of Ukrainians, exemplified by the heroic attitudes of soldiers and ordinary people. It is enough to quote the words of the heroic border guards from the Snake Island that the whole world has heard about, and their "violent soldier response", which has become a symbol of Ukrainian resistance. An excellent example of a cultural heritage that connects history and the present is the hundred-year-old song Red Kalina, sung by the Ukrainian musician Andriy Chyžniuk. After the invasion of Russia, this artist

joined the territorial defense. Chylniuk, dressed in a uniform, sang Red Kalina in the deserted center of Kiev, with the Cathedral of the God's Wisdom behind his back. The culmination of this event was the single released on April 7 by Pink Floyd, which spread the song and the artist all over the world. This offers a good example of cultural heritage in making, reinforcing the observation of constant development of culture and cultural heritage.

The armed conflict carries a number of threats to the broadly defined cultural heritage. Tangible objects of cultural heritage are exposed to destructive influence of military operations, both in the combat zone and later by the occupation forces. The occupation of state's territory during an armed conflict creates also threats to the intangible cultural heritage. Occupation forces prevent the cultivation of traditions and suppress cultural expressions that express national identity. Cultural heritage is the source of the nation's strength and allows it to continue resistance to armed aggression. Therefore, efforts aimed at protecting Ukrainian national heritage play important role in the ongoing war. At the same time, they inspire debates on the lessons that can be learned from Ukrainian experience and their applicability to future armed conflicts.

3. Lessons from Ukraine

The actions of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine have been monitored by almost the entire world. Particular attention is paid to Russian military operations primarily by the states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to which Poland belongs. The last six months of military action in Ukraine have been dense with events, and many of them are of significant long-term importance. Even though more than eighty years have passed since the outbreak of World War II, the Kremlin's rhetoric has not changed, and the tactics of fighting are also reminiscent of Soviet actions. In the context of the issues discussed, it should be stated that the method of organization, training, and the effective tactics chosen by the Ukrainians meant that the invaders encountered strong resistance. It is safe to say that the Russian aggressor did not take into account a highly subjective factor, which was the will of the Ukrainian people to fight in defense of their homeland. Due to the determination of the inhabitants, discipline, and the role of the Ukrainian leadership, Ukraine continues to struggle and inflicts heavy losses on the aggressor. The aforementioned human factor, obviously in conjunction with the supply of weapons, is something unusual, which makes it possible to effectively resist the Russian numerous and to some extent technological advantage [17].

When considering the issues of the human factor in war, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of cultural heritage, which is nowadays associated with the tradition, history and identity of the Ukrainian nation. A common cultural heritage links the past with current struggle against the aggression. It provides fundamental values and strengthens the Ukrainian narrative that has been underestimated by the Russian aggressor. In the Ukrainian example, one can see what happens when there is a synergy of organized, trained and motivated armed forces to fight, and what happens when there is no such motivation. The policy of Ukrainian identity, built on the basis of its own cultural heritage, makes it a key factor, in motivating the national defence and resistance. In that respect, cultural heritage should always be taken into account by both sides of the conflict [15]. Therefore, the goal of the Russian invasion is not only to destroy Ukraine's critical and military infrastructure, but also to destroy the aforementioned Ukrainian memory and identity [36]. In this way, Ukrainian cultural heritage sites, especially sacred buildings, memorial complexes, monuments, museums, art and historic collections, theaters and libraries have become targets for Russian kinetic and non-kinetic actions [30]. Massive shelling of objects tied to Ukrainian cultural heritage has been an indisputable sign of the war crimes committed by Russia against the Ukrainian nation and its cultural heritage.

Losses to Ukrainian cultural heritage are not tied only to memorials or monuments. Cultural heritage consists of all historical objects, collected works of art and documents showing the history and achievements of culture. Those elements of national heritage are extremely important, even inalienable for the identity foundations of each society (nation). Taking that into account, one may see that military operations of the Russian troops in Ukraine, according to the documented data of the UNESCO Secretariat, led to the destruction of nearly two hundred fifty objects of great importance for Ukrainian cultural heritage just in the first two months of aggression. Initial months of the Russian aggression against Ukraine raised the awareness of international community to evolving threats to cultural heritage and for a need of better protection of them during an armed conflict. The impact of Russian aggression on Ukrainian cultural heritage was especially visible on April 18, 2022, on the International Day for the Protection of Monuments and the Day of Historical and Cultural Monuments in Ukraine. Russian actions were clearly contrary to its obligations under the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of an Armed Conflict of May 14, 1954 [11]. In this international treaty, Russia pledged to protect cultural property against damage, destruction, theft, looting and illegal seizure in war or armed conflict. Furthermore, Russia has been signatory to the First Protocol to this Convention, which regulates, inter alia, preservation and movement of cultural goods in the event of occupation and war [20].

The damage to Ukrainian cultural heritage resulting from Russian aggression since February 2022 is staggering.

According to Ukrainian authorities, by the end of August 2022 four hundred twenty-nine Ukrainian cultural heritage sites and cultural institutions fell victim to Russian attacks. Direct military actions (shelling) by Russian military forces destroyed or damaged at least one hundred forty objects of cultural heritage by the end of August 2022. The targets for Russian fires included twenty-three monuments of national importance, one hundred ten monuments of local importance, one hundred twenty-nine valuable historical buildings, and seven newly discovered items of cultural heritage. The threat to Ukrainian cultural heritage continued on the territories that were captured by Russian forces. Russian occupying forces destroyed or damaged three hundred sixty-eight other cultural sites or institutions. Religious buildings suffered the greatest damage as the Russian occupying forces completely destroyed or damaged at least one hundred sixty-six of them. Around one third of those religious buildings registered as architectural or historical monuments or urban planning monuments. Ukrainian authorities reported also destruction or damage to seventy-three cultural centers, theaters, cinemas, and other centers of the arts, fifty-two memorial monuments, forty-five libraries, and thirty-five museums, along with significant items and areas in nature reserves. By the end of August 2022 destruction or damage of Ukrainian cultural heritage was recorded in fifteen regions of Ukraine. The regions of Donetsk, Kharkov, Kyiv, Luhansk and Chernihiv suffered the worst destruction and damage to their cultural heritage. The locations of the damage or destruction to cultural heritage coincided with the regions, where the fiercest fighting took place. Ukrainian authorities claimed that in Mariupol alone, ninety-three buildings or monuments of cultural heritage were damaged or destroyed. The figures for Kharkov and its vicinity were eighty-six. Russian forces damaged or destroyed seventy-nine significant monuments and buildings were in Kyiv region. Approximately fifty-two objects of cultural heritage were destroyed or damaged in the district of Bucha [33]. According to data verified by the UNESCO one hundred eighty-six sites of cultural heritage have been damaged since 24 February 2022 until 05 September 2022. Among them, seventy-nine religious buildings, thirteen museums, thirty-six historical buildings, thirty-two buildings dedicated to cultural activities, seventeen monuments and nine libraries were damaged or destroyed. The UNESCO has been using cross-checking the reported incidents of the damage to the sites of Ukrainian cultural heritage with multiple credible sources, to include satellite image analysis. Nevertheless, the statistics available are partial ones. The numbers will raise as the war continues and new evidence of destruction and damage to Ukrainian cultural property are being found [31].

In the discussion on the importance and protection of cultural heritage during armed conflicts, the aspect of preparedness should be addressed. Despite clear indicators of an imminent aggression emerging in late 2021 and early 2022, the majority of the Ukrainian population did not believe in the feasibility of a Russian full-scale aggression against entire country. Undoubtedly, that was why the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, despite numerous appeals from museum workers, did not issue any recommendations regarding the early evacuation of cultural goods. In this situation, the initiators for the protection of monuments were local social activists and three directors of Odessa museums, who initiated the evacuation of the most valuable collections to Western part of Ukraine. Nevertheless, the speed and scale of Russian aggression in February 2022 made evacuation of cultural goods from museums in Eastern Ukraine virtually impossible. The refugees blocked the roads; there was no transportation or work force available to organize for timely evacuation. Therefore, in most cases, the protection of cultural heritage meant often to put collections of cultural or historic artifacts to the museums' basements. Numerous volunteers helped museums by providing their own vehicles and materials for packaging, maintenance and protection. Local cultural activists collected and distributed the necessary information, which facilitated evacuations, in the first place, museum collections from small towns and villages. It was dictated by huge needs and limited resources that were at the disposal of the central authorities. The activities of the volunteers were not limited only to evacuation. Ukrainian cultural activists such as social organizations, volunteers and entrepreneurs were also involved in the protection of immovable monuments in various centers, covering them with, for example, with sandbags, boards or wrapping them in plastic or protective nets [1]. Moreover, they documented numerous war crimes of Russian soldiers on the property of Ukraine's cultural heritage. Among the initiatives aimed at protection of Ukrainian cultural heritage, the Heritage Emergency Response Initiative (HERI) should be mentioned. It brings together local cultural workers, volunteers and the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy. HERI provides emergency assistance and training to institutions of cultural heritage [28].

Damage and destruction of Ukrainian cultural heritage by Russian actions prompted international reaction that involved numerous international organizations, national governmental support, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations. Already in the first month of the war, a special session of the UNESCO Executive Council (Paris, March 15-16, 2022) took place in Paris. It adopted unequivocally a decision condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Members of the Executive Council, which includes, inter alia, Poland, denounced the dramatic consequences of the Russian invasion against Ukraine. In addition, the member states expressed their strong opposition to the violation by the Russian Federation of international law obligations, including those on protection of cultural and natural heritage. Moreover, UNESCO condemned the irreversible destruction of memorials and

cultural monuments in Kharkiv, Kiev, Zaporizhia and many other places in Ukraine. The UNESCO Executive Council considered scandalous, among others, bombing by Russia on March 1, 2022 a TV tower located in Babi Jar, a ravine where a German concentration camp was located during World War II, and where tens of thousands of Jews died [23]. UNESCO agreed on active cooperation in identifying and documenting Russian war crimes on the territory of Ukraine, joining efforts in the field of preservation of Ukrainian cultural monuments. The UNESCO helps in identifying and marking the sites of cultural heritage in Ukraine. There are ongoing efforts to put additional seventeen historic and cultural sites on the UNESCO World's Heritage List. Ukraine and UNESCO work together on granting the immovable cultural heritage objects status of enhanced protection. By doing so, the destruction of cultural heritage objects in Ukraine by the Russian forces would be automatically considered a war crime [31]. Among others, Ukraine request the inscription of Odesa on UNESCO's World Heritage List. UNESCO plans also deployment of new measures to protect Ukrainian cultural heritage, particularly in Odesa and L'viv. At the same time, UNESCO helps in protection of Ukrainian intangible cultural heritage. A recent example of the UNESCO support to the protection of Ukrainian cultural heritage is inscribing the culture of Ukrainian borscht cooking on the UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding on 1 July 2022. This serves as a solid support to protecting Ukrainian national identity and its culture. UNESCO promised to provide financial support to Ukrainian artists to support the continuation of artistic creation and access to cultural life, under a pilot programme launched by the Organization in partnership with the Ukrainian NGO Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). There are proposals for a special fund under the UNESCO auspices to finance cultural heritage of Ukraine during ongoing conflict, and for the post-conflict period [32]. There are ongoing efforts to digitize at least part of Ukrainian cultural heritage. One of them is Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online (SUCHO) project that involves cultural heritage professionals such librarians, archivists, researchers and programmers from a number of universities internationally [29].

UNESCO has been facilitating emergency response to address needs associated with protection of Ukrainian cultural heritage. Numerous international organizations / institutions have been providing support to Ukraine. Some of them include the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), Blue Shield International, the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Alliance for Protecting Cultural Goods in Conflict Areas (ALIPH) [38]. Just to provide a glimpse of efforts undertaken by international organizations, it is worth to highlight some of their projects. National committees of the Blue Shield continue to support Ukraine with donations and financial support, monitoring the status of cultural heritage, creation of tools for online assistance to documentation and assessment of the damage to Ukrainian cultural property, and statements and awareness raising. The International Council of Museums (ICOM) has been offering special grants that are available to the countries that have been supporting, or want to support, Ukrainian museums and museum professionals [35]. ICOM Poland launched initiative to support Ukrainian museum professionals arriving in Poland as refugees [39]. International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) has been active supporting Ukraine. ICCROM has the translation of key publications focused on the protection of cultural heritage in crises. ICCROM plans also to provide training for assessing damage, risks and needs for movable and immovable cultural heritage goods, and to provide necessary advice on other ongoing efforts to protect Ukrainian cultural heritage. Ukraine has been supported by national grants that are directly used to improve protection of its cultural heritage during wartime and for helping workers of cultural sector [37].

Initial observations related to protection of Ukrainian cultural heritage during Russian aggression reveal complexity of such efforts. Threats to Ukrainian cultural heritage were not a mere result of collateral damage during military operations [13]. Damage and destruction of Ukrainian cultural property was not only a result of indiscriminate artillery and missile fires, but was also caused by deliberate demolition by occupying forces. Russian targeting of sites of symbolic value to Ukrainian national identity seem part of a campaign to undermine Ukrainian claims to nationhood and its cultural identity. Cultural heritage sites fell victims of a carefully planned campaign aimed at depriving the people of Ukraine of key elements of their national identity. Ukrainian cultural heritage became the subject of a "hybrid war, the aim of which is to lower the morale and fighting spirit of the Ukrainians [12]. The introduction of numerous legal regulations, based mainly on the activities of a specialized United Nations organization - UNESCO, in order to limit the destruction of the most valuable cultural monuments during an armed conflict, did not contribute to ensuring security against possible damage by the aggressor [10]. Initial efforts aimed at protection of cultural heritage were decentralized. They depended heavily on communities of local Ukrainian cultural workers and volunteers. International support to Ukraine has included numerous actors that helped to map the damage and destruction to Ukrainian cultural heritage, assisted in physical protection of cultural goods and took care of Ukrainian cultural workers [34]. While the emergency assistance to Ukraine has been a priority since the Russian aggression in February 2022, serious thoughts are devoted to the post-conflict period.

4. Six months of war more important than years of deliberation. Conclusions for Poland

Years of theoretical considerations haven't provided as many answers to key issues for cultural heritage protection in Poland as just a few months of the war in Ukraine. The lessons learned from protecting Ukrainian cultural heritage against Russian aggression are invaluable to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Based on observations accumulated during initial months of Russian aggression against Ukraine Poland can improve assessments of the threats to its cultural heritage, and increase its resilience against deliberate damage or destruction in an armed conflict [4]. Russia's aggression against Ukraine may be a kind of shock therapy for Poland, as it will be no longer to ignore evident shortcomings in organization for protection of cultural heritage. The value of material artifacts of cultural heritage, apart from the acts of international law, has also been incorporated in Polish legislation, starting with the highest-ranking documents. The preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of April 2, 1997 emphasizes the state's obligation towards ancestors. Polish society and the state owe them culture and values that need to be nurtured in order to further popularize and disseminate. The place of such entries in the introduction underlines the connection of the entire document with over a thousand years of Polish culture and history [7]. National cultural heritage is subject to legal protection in Poland. The respect for cultural heritage has been also included in the provisions of the Penal Code [25]. It is worth noting that before the Act on the *Protection of Monuments and the Guardianship of Monuments* of 2003 came into force [24], the *Act on the Protection of Cultural Property* [23] was in force in Poland, which closely followed the *Hague Convention* of 1954 [15] and was limited only to monuments [26]. The presented documents currently provide an interpretation of the legal situation of entities protecting cultural property in Poland [6]. According to the provisions of Polish legal framework, the purpose of the actions of state authorities in the field of protection of cultural heritage is primarily to respond to emerging threats, which until February 24, 2022, amounted to catastrophes or terrorist threats.

The conflict in Ukraine acted as a sobering wake up call, as not much attention was paid to the protection of cultural heritage in Poland in times of war. Although no new regulations have been introduced yet to improve protection of cultural heritage because of Ukrainian experience, it triggered some practical actions. It became evident that institutions and organizations responsible for the protection of cultural heritage in Poland need revamping. The audit of protection of historic heritage in Poland conducted by the Supreme Accounting Office from 2018 to 2021 revealed that it lacked proper coordination between territorial self-government authorities and specialized governmental agencies for protection of historic heritage. The system was not sufficiently funded nor manned. It was too slow in processing requests for better protection of historic heritage [40]. With such shortcoming during peacetime, there is little hope for the system to work during an armed conflict. Unfortunately, as of now only the discussion started. The discussion shows that public organizations must take into account changes in society and the local environment on an ongoing basis. These changes must also take into account new standards of public service provision. They have to move away from the traditional, bureaucratic style of old scenarios. Moreover, new threat scenarios should take into account those of a hybrid nature and not be limited to one *ad hoc* adjustment.

There is an urgent need to raise awareness of Polish society on the importance of protection of cultural heritage. An opinion poll carried out on March 17-23, 2022 by ARC Rynek i Opinia using the CAWI method [5]. It surveyed opinions of a reliable group of Polish respondents about their concerns and implications for Poland stemming from the war in Ukraine. These studies show, inter alia, that twenty-eight percent of the respondents considered defense preparations and civil protection training of the society as necessary. Unfortunately, protection of cultural heritage was not a priority for the respondents. They prioritize training related to giving first aid, using weapons or using gas masks [9]. This proves that majority of citizens view the armed conflict through the prism of their own survival. The respondents did not mention requirements for defending own national identity nor protection of cultural heritage. The lack of such answers may also prove that the respondents believe that the protection of key facilities is responsibility of appropriate state institutions. As the early months of war in Ukraine show, that might not be the case. Therefore, local communities need better understanding on the value of cultural heritage, its role for strengthening national identity and resilience.

Improvements to protection of cultural heritage in Poland may benefit from new standards to public administration. Those may include implementation of the principles of strategic and marketing management, measuring the effects of activities carried out by public administration units in the short and long term, and implementation of a quality assurance system. For protection of historical and cultural monuments, some improvements may result from the use of the existing electronic administration (e-government) solutions. They may facilitate an increased awareness and knowledge in the society on protection of cultural heritage. In a similar way "Alert RCB" system, which is an SMS warning system against threats, may improve collection of information related to the status of material elements of cultural heritage. Short text messages In case of an emergency, such systems may also enable exchange of short information on protection of particular sites and objects of cultural heritage. Another important element strengthening the system of protection of cultural heritage is greater involvement of local government administration by organizing

additional initiatives for the protection of cultural heritage. People responsible for this task should be charismatic and authoritative. It should be remembered that the lower the level, the greater their recognition and charisma should be. Moreover, they should be people honored with respect from the local community. Another way to improve the quality of protection of cultural heritage is proper education for security, which aims to prepare the society for rational behavior in the face of possible threats, as well as mobilization to participate in various projects, both in times of peace and potential armed conflict.

In the era of the knowledge society, education pose the most urgent and at the same time the most difficult challenge for those responsible for the protection of cultural heritage. It is a challenge of gradual modernization of the school education system from the lowest levels. Research shows that currently not only the school itself is changing, but also its teaching. The effectiveness of education in the field of protection of cultural heritage depends primarily on the subject matter knowledge and didactic skills of teachers. The quality of teaching depends on teachers' specialist competences regarding the selection of educational content, knowledge of modern methods and forms of education, and the ability to use the available didactic aids. Education for cultural heritage must aim to prepare society for rational behavior in the face of changing threats and challenges during peacetime, crisis and war. It should mobilize for active participation in various local projects, e.g. sports, defense and education with the participation of not only schools, but also relevant state and local government bodies. Education for protection of cultural heritage should take into account, for example, the age, specificity, culture and history of individual students and local communities. In addition, it should ensure individual development and teamwork skills. The main goal of education for the protection of cultural heritage should also be to develop readiness for decisive and rational action in the event of a real threat. Education is a cornerstone for the effective protection of cultural heritage against destruction or damage, as it helps preparing the society for actions taking into account various risk scenarios.

There are many observations and lessons that Poland can learn from Ukraine in terms of protection of cultural heritage. It is peacetime when conceptual and legal frameworks for protection of cultural heritage need to be developed, implemented and tested. A clear delineation and coordination of responsibilities and efforts by all stakeholders to the protection of cultural heritage is needed. To be effective, the institutions responsible for protection of cultural heritage need to be funded and manned at relevant level. Introduction of new standards to public administration may facilitate better protection of cultural heritage in peacetime, crisis and war. There is an urgent need to raise the societal awareness of on the importance of protection of cultural heritage. Education will be of importance to establish solid foundations for a consolidated, whole of the society approach to protection of cultural heritage in Poland.

5. Conclusions

Protection of cultural heritage during an armed conflict is a responsibility the stems directly from the humanitarian law of armed conflict. It is important because of value of cultural heritage to the future generations. It is important also because of an unifying power of culture to strengthen nation's resilience against an armed aggression. There are numerous threats to cultural heritage during armed conflicts. The material artifacts of cultural heritage are vulnerable to destructive influence of military operations, both in the combat zone and later by the occupation forces. Those occupying forces pose also threats to the intangible cultural heritage. Initial observations on protection of Ukrainian cultural heritage during Russian aggression reveal complexity of such efforts. Ukrainian cultural heritage was a subject to deliberate targeting to undermine Ukrainian claims to nationhood and its cultural identity. It aimed at depriving the people of Ukraine of key elements of their national identity. Initial efforts aimed at protection of cultural heritage were depended mainly on local communities of cultural workers and volunteers. International support to Ukraine has helped in documenting the damage and destruction to Ukrainian cultural heritage, physical protection of cultural goods and taking care of Ukrainian cultural workers. International assistance to protection of cultural heritage in Ukraine focuses on short-term wartime priorities, but serious thoughts are devoted to the post-conflict period.

Poland can learn a number of lessons from Ukrainian efforts on the protection of cultural heritage. While conceptual and legal frameworks for protection of cultural heritage in Poland have been developed, they need to be fully implemented and tested. Some additional efforts are required for better delineation and coordination for all stakeholders to the protection of cultural heritage. Institutions responsible for protection of cultural heritage need improved funding and staffing. Societal awareness of on the importance of protection of cultural heritage needs more attention. This stresses the importance of education, which will be crucial for establishment of solid foundations for a consolidated, whole of the society approach to protection of cultural heritage in Poland.

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