

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Displaced Pensioners and Peace in the Donbass Conflict

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What should the role of the internally displaced pensioners be in contributing to lasting peace in the Donbass conflict (April 2014-April 2021)? This thesis argues that the displaced pensioners in Ukraine face unique challenges because of their old age and displacement status, and that addressing these challenges through changing the currently discriminatory Ukrainian national policies is a necessary step to a sustainable peace. It seeks to establish the importance of consideration and inclusion of displaced and older populations in the addressing their own needs, and to argue that displacement issues are issues of security and peace. Access to pension payments provide a central challenge to the displaced pensioners, and their displacement has resulted in their development of everyday peace practices which may lay the foundation for future advocacy and reconciliation.

Displaced Pensioners and Peace in the Donbass Conflict

By

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I. Introduction

This thesis aims to answer what the role of internally displaced pensioners should be in contributing to lasting peace in the Donbass conflict. I argue that displacement issues are security issues, and that addressing displacement issues of the pensioners in Ukraine is a necessary step toward sustainable peace in the Donbass. The displaced pensioners in Ukraine face unique challenges in the humanitarian crisis surrounding the conflict, with access to pension payments, voting, and government healthcare presenting central challenges. Involvement of the displaced pensioners in the formation of policy would encourage adequate consideration of both displacement issues and issues related to old age. The everyday peace practices developed by the pensioners during their displacement lays a foundation from which they can integrate or reintegrate, once provided with the necessary support for their displacement-related issues.

However, the current national policies of Ukraine exacerbate key causes of the conflict, namely divisiveness in society and politics, through their discrimination against and framing of Ukrainians in the non-government-controlled areas (NGCA). Involving the displaced pensioners in creating and implementing solutions to their issues will be conducive to their efficacy. The displaced pensioners who have moved into communities in government-controlled areas (GCA) are positioned to represent and advocate for the issues of those in the NGCA. This capacity of the displaced pensioners is especially applicable for representation the hardships experienced by other displaced pensioners. That said, without formal rectification of discriminatory national policies toward the displaced pensioners, the peace reached may bring a halt to the violence without the resolution of underlying divisions in the conflict. Left ignored, these divisions within Ukrainian society will challenge any form of peace that is achieved. Durable solutions for the

issues specific to the displaced pensioners can serve to build more sustainable conditions for peace by promoting integration into the GCA or reintegration into the NGCA and fostering reconciliation through the correction of social injustice.

In this chapter, I establish the relevant background information on the conflict's time frame, actors, and causes. Next, I review the relevant literature on older populations in humanitarian crises, bottom-up peacebuilding, and the internally displaced in relation to peace. I then outline my methodology for the thesis, explaining the types of sources that I used. At the end of the chapter, I give a short overview of the structure of the remainder of the thesis.

Background

Overview of Conflict

The focus of this thesis is the displaced pensioners in the ongoing conflict in the Donbass region of Ukraine. "Donbass" refers to the Donets Basin region and includes parts of Russia and Ukraine (International Crisis Group 1). The region is tied together economically and historically. It served as a strong industrial base presence in the Soviet Union, but due to declining infrastructure and a globalized economy is now a less wealthy region (International Crisis Group 1). The part of the Donbass that is of interest is the Ukrainian portion, composed of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts,¹ as this is where the conflict exists (International Crisis Group i; Kuzio 103).

The conflict began in mid-April of 2014—after the November 2013 mass protests against President Yanukovich for turning down closer ties to the European Union and Russia's March 2014 annexation of Crimea²—with separatist movements in Donetsk and Luhansk (Council on

¹ An oblast is the largest type of administrative division in Ukraine. There are 24 in total, in addition to the Republic of Crimea. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/ukraine/#government>

² The Crimean peninsula, or Crimea, has been recognized as a part of Ukraine since its independence in 1991. From 1954-1991, it was a part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Crimea was annexed by the Russian (cont. p. 3)

Foreign Relations “Conflict”). Russian military and financial support to the separatists is well-documented and has been instrumental to the success of the insurgency in gaining control of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (Åtland 128). Russia has represented its aid to the insurgency as a means of protecting its “compatriots,” or ethnic Russian population in eastern Ukraine, claiming the right to do so through the international Responsibility to Protect doctrine (Dunn and Bobick 409). The Russian government maintains that the conflict is an internal one, while the Ukrainian government sees the conflict as external Russian aggression (Åtland 127). The Ukrainian government wants its territory back, but Russia would like to see the separatist republics join the Russian Federation or be granted autonomy (Åtland 129). Seven years on, after multiple failed agreements and negotiations conducted with the heads of state (Åtland; Dickinson), the conflict remains stalled but ongoing (Council on Foreign Relations “Conflict”).

The Displaced Pensioners

Of the 1.5 million displaced by the conflict (UNHCR “Registration”), over half are pensioners (Van Metre et al.). Most are located in the non-government controlled portion of the Donbass region (UNHCR “Registration”). A defining characteristic of the displaced pensioners is that those residing in the Donbass are required to register as internally displaced, and then to cross over the contact line in order to receive their pensions (Stern; Van Metre et al.). This requirement presents physical and financial consequences to the displaced pensioners, and also puts them in a distinct place in relation to the conflict.

Current Peace Process

Federation on March 18, 2014 and is occupied to this day. Russia laid historical and ethnic claims to Crimea, citing its history as Russian land and the present-day ethnic Russian majority that lives there. This annexation violates the UN Charter, 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the 1994 Budapest Memorandum of Security Assurances for Ukraine and the 1997 Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and Russia.
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/03/17/crimea-six-years-after-illegal-annexation/>

The seven-year-long peace process has been centered on talks between the national governments of Ukraine and Russia, mediated by France, Germany, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (Åtland; BBC “Can Peace”; Peters and Shapkina). Ceasefires have been implemented in 2014, 2015 and 2019, only to be broken later on (Dickinson “Russian Escalation”; Peters and Shapkina). Prospects for a sustained ceasefire are therefore pessimistic. Peace talks are ongoing, and the last agreed-upon step to peace in October 2019 involves elections in the NGCA under Ukrainian law and the watch of the OSCE, with the condition of autonomous statuses for the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR) (BBC “Can Peace”). The terms of the agreement would allow for elections in the NGCA before the withdrawal of Russian troops, and the elections would occur with most pro-Ukrainian citizens having left the area (BBC “Anger”). Ukrainian President Zelensky, who asserts that the elections will be free and fair, promises the withdrawal of Russian troops before the elections take place (Miller). He faces domestic pressure to not make agreements that could be seen as giving into Russian interests, a concern that is raised by the elections (BBC “Can Peace”). Widespread backlash against the condition of autonomy has been voiced in the GCA (Lynch). The incompatible nature of Ukrainian interests with the realities of this agreement gives the elections a lower chance of creating sustainable peace.

Literature Review

This thesis aims to build on the literature on older people and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in humanitarian crises, displacement and peace, and bottom-up peacebuilding. It analyzes the combination of pensioner and IDP statuses, the displacement issues of older populations and their significance to peace, and the potential relationship of displaced populations of older people

with bottom-up peacebuilding. I draw on the literature on older persons in humanitarian crises, bottom-up peacebuilding, and internally displaced persons and peace.

Focus on the elderly in displacement

Existing literature demonstrates the gap regarding agedness in evaluating humanitarian disasters, such as those resulting in displacement. Karunakara (1) and Hutton (1) note that older people (60 years or older) are the fastest growing age group, but have traditionally not been well included in the humanitarian response processes. Karunakura (1) and Hutton (1) argue that aggregating older people with the larger adult population has led to a large gap in data. They find that older people are disproportionately affected by humanitarian crises (Hutton 1; Karunakura 1). Hutton finds that older people are more likely to have impaired health or physical ability (5), tend to be disproportionately impoverished in poorer countries (11), and are often isolated or socially marginalized within their communities (13). All of these traits are made worse in the context of conflict or disaster (Hutton 5, 11, 13).

NGOs and IGOS have pointed out the vulnerabilities of older IDPs (UNHCR “Older Persons”; Wells). HelpAge International connects the focus on older people to internal displacement status (Wells). They highlight that there are more internally displaced persons (IDPs) globally than refugees, that the number of IDPs is rising, and that IDPs are often one of the most neglected groups in society (Wells 5). They explore how older people are uniquely harmed by displacement, as well as how they have been empowered through taking on informal leadership roles in their communities (Wells). This thesis will aim to provide the same insight within the context of the Donbass conflict and the peace process in assessing the vulnerabilities of the displaced pensioners.

Bottom-up peacebuilding: merits and shortcomings

The recognition of the shortcomings of formal peace processes around the world, those between representatives of nations or international organizations, has led to a growing interest in less formal, “bottom-up” peacebuilding measures. These measures prioritize influencing relations among members of society not directly involved in the top-level peace negotiations, in the hopes of influencing wider changes and shifts toward conflict resolution. MacGinty outlines criticisms of the formal, top-level “liberal peace” approach, a state- and IGO-centric approach to reform focusing on strengthening democratic political and economic institutions (Paris 337), as being top-down and non-transformative. He argues for inclusion of bottom-up strategies (“Indigenous Peace” 142). MacGinty discusses the concept of “everyday peace,” “the practices and norms deployed by individuals and groups in deeply divided societies to avoid and minimize conflict and awkward situations at both inter- and intragroup levels” (“Everyday peace” 553). MacGinty argues that acts of everyday peace are a form of agency, and that international actors may learn from them when pursuing peace (“Everyday peace” 550, 561). Berents and McEvoy-Levy echo the sentiment that everyday peace may be useful to draw from for international peacemakers, and argue that age categories are tied to power relations in society (Berents and McEvoy-Levy 117). This thesis will seek to show how the acts of everyday peace by displaced pensioners may serve a role in peacebuilding.

The introduction of the concept of bottom-up peacebuilding has not been received as a universal solution. Richmond argues that a “hybrid” peace which draws on bottom-up and top-down approaches can be positive for lasting peace, or negative if the two approaches are imbalanced in their application (62). LeFranc also discusses the limitations of “bottom-up” peacebuilding by critiquing the conceptualization of society and societal interactions as a

simplifiable to a “chain of interpersonal relations” (14). Her critique highlights that peaceful individuals do not automatically constitute peaceful states as a collective. She points out that conflict often highlights group identities and people having a memory of the past or shared values does not reliably prevent violence (LeFranc). This thesis will consider the successes and limitations to “bottom-up” peacebuilding to assess the potential role in the peace process for displaced pensioners in Ukraine by examining the role of the displaced in different levels of peace processes as outlined by Lederach’s three “tracks”: top leadership (track one), middle-range leadership including civil society organizations (track two), and grassroots leadership (track three) (Lederach).

Internally displaced persons and peace

On the role of IDPs in peace processes, Koser determines that “there is a distinct lack of literature” (14). He draws insight into their role in peace processes by examining cases of IDPs according to Lederach’s tracks. Koser finds limited documentation of IDPs influencing peace processes on any level of society according to this three-track model, aside from participation in broader civil society advocacy groups. Koser argues that the internally displaced must be addressed specifically when pursuing peace. He concludes that failure to consider IDPs and their specific problems in peacebuilding jeopardizes peace, whereas resolution of the needs of IDPs strengthens peace (Koser 43).

When it comes to Ukraine, Koser’s insights are especially valuable. In fact, Van Metre et al. identify five ways that IDPs in Ukraine are contributing to peace: “IDPs are contributing to local economies, advocating for each other, and supporting local reconciliation efforts; many are building bridges between eastern and western regions of Ukraine; and some are advancing a peace process through their activism (Van Metre et al. 14). They mention the large proportion of

pensioners in the displaced population (Van Metre et al. 2-3), but unfortunately do not expand upon this factor in relation to their argument. This thesis seeks to focus in on the relationship between internally displaced pensioners and peace.

Methodology

This thesis analyzes the potential for displaced pensioners in Ukraine to contribute to the Donbass conflict peace process. To reach this objective, I first explored the relevant background details and facts of the conflict. The conflict is ongoing, so the time frame examined in this study will span from its beginning in mid-April 2014 to up to the completion of this thesis in mid-April 2021. I intended for the original time frame to end with December 2020 due to the timeline on my research project. The violent conflict at the time was, though persistent, for the most part stagnant. However, 2021 has seen the escalation of violence and antagonism between Ukraine, the Russian-backed separatists, and Russia (Dickinson “Is Putin”). This has come to a peak in the beginning of April 2021, with the buildup of several tens of thousands of Russian troops on the eastern border of Ukraine and in Crimea, and the breakdown of dialogue between Russia and Ukraine (Karmanau; Ordynova; Peter; Zhegulev and Osborn). The elections in the Donbass discussed in October 2019 have yet to take place. These developments are significant because I aim to demonstrate that formal peace processes have failed to resolve the conflict due to incompatible interests of and pressures on the heads of state who are involved. Throughout this conflict, the displaced pensioners have suffered the most. Many of their needs relating to housing, healthcare, safety, and citizenry remain unmet and worsening. I argue that involving these pensioners in the advocacy for peace and displacement issues is critical to progress toward peace.

I reference academic articles and books to outline the literature on the broader topics relevant to the research question, including older populations in humanitarian crises, peace and bottom-up peacebuilding, internally displaced persons, and civil society. To search for relevant sources, I used the University of Michigan Library and Google Scholar systems. Search terms included “displacement,” “internally displaced persons,” “IDPs,” “agedness,” “older people,” “bottom-up,” “top-down,” “peace,” “peacebuilding,” “civil conflict,” “grassroots,” and “civil society.”

To explore the situation of the displaced pensioners in the context of the Donbass conflict, I draw on newspaper articles, nongovernmental reports, and intergovernmental organization reports. I rely on these sources for many details regarding the conflict, peace process, and situations of the displaced pensioners because the conflict is both recent and ongoing. I use newspaper articles published online by American (The Associated Press, The Washington Post, TIME, CBS, CNBC), British (BBC), and international (Reuters) agencies. I draw reports from the nongovernmental organizations including the Atlantic Council, the Council on Foreign Relations, HelpAge International, the International Crisis Group, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, the International Organization of Pension Supervisors, and the Norwegian Refugee Council, and from United Nations agencies including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, High Commissioner for Refugees, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Fund for Women, and World Health Organization.

It is also important to acknowledge the interests of news organizations, NGOs, and IGOs. News organizations seeking to publish to an audience for revenue may not cover all important facts of the situation, but rather ones it considers to be interesting to its intended audience. In the case of the news sources that I drew from, this audience is neither in Ukraine nor Russia. They

may be more impartial since they are not directly a party to the conflict, but still biased against the countries themselves due to the conflict's importance to international security. Along the same lines, NGOs and IGOs may be swayed by their sources of funding such as governments. They also are limited in the topics of information included in their publications by their specific mandates.

A limitation on my research was my decision to use English-language sources only. I decided to limit myself in this way because I am not a native speaker of either Russian or Ukrainian, and I wanted to maximize my ability to understand and engage with the materials that I chose. This choice prevented me from using a variety of sources that would have been relevant to this thesis, in particular sources from Ukrainian- and Russian-language nonprofits and newspapers providing details on the conflict and displaced pensioners in the time frame of interest. Use of such sources would have provided insight into the perspectives of those residing in Ukraine, and also insight into the perspectives that were being given to them. Use of sources based outside of Ukraine for audiences outside of Ukraine may reflect intentional or unintentional bias against the country or Russia.

Design

The next three chapters discuss how the displaced pensioners differ from other groups to the conflict in relation to peace. In Chapter Two, I establish the significance of the coupled statuses of internally displaced persons and pensioners. Chapter Three assesses the relationship between displacement and peace, and Chapter Four highlights the role of civil society in peacebuilding. In all three chapters, I discuss the implications for the displaced pensioners. The final chapter draws together these discussions, explores limitations and additional considerations, and offers conclusions for the research question.

Chapter 2: Why Consider Agedness and Displacement in Ukraine?

I. Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that displaced pensioners face unique challenges in humanitarian crises, and that in the context of the Donbass conflict the official and unofficial policies of the Ukrainian government exacerbate the causes of the conflict through their selective discrimination against the displaced pensioners. This chapter seeks to establish the relevance and significance of agedness in the population of interest—displaced pensioners in Ukraine in the timeframe of the Donbass conflict (2014-*present*). I begin by defining internal displacement. I then discuss older persons in humanitarian disasters to assess the characteristics which distinguish their age group from younger age groups. Furthermore, this overview of how older people are treated in humanitarian crises and how older people experience humanitarian crises will serve to contextualize the situation of older people in the Donbass conflict and the challenges that they experience. Following this discussion, I will narrow the focus onto the older people who are internally displaced in Ukraine. This section will show the direct impact of the conflict on the displaced pensioners and identify peculiarities in their situations. Outlining the real and potential impacts of agedness in the context of humanitarian crises is a necessary step toward defining the role of older persons who are internally displaced in the context of the Donbass conflict.

II. Defining Internal Displacement

The concept of internal displacement is formalized in the the United Nations definition for “internally displaced persons”:

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence ... and who have not crossed an internationally

recognized State border (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs “Guiding Principles”)

The UNOCHA definition also lists potential reasons for displacement: “in particular ... the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters” (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs “Guiding Principles”). The definition does not limit causes for internal displacement to these explicit causes, but in general they describe conflict and/or humanitarian crises. This is the definition most often used in the literature on displacement (Koser 29; Mooney 14).

The internally displaced are, by definition, a distinct group of people, within a nation. Depending on the context, this group may be diverse. Regardless, displaced people tend to be more vulnerable than non-displaced people, due to the loss of shelter, property, community, food security, and access to government services (Mooney 15-17). Their status as displaced separates them from other groups in conflicts and crises, and this creates needs particular to their situations.

III. Older Persons in Humanitarian Crises

Many researchers use the United Nations definition of “older persons,” which refers to individuals older than 60 (Hutton; Kowal & Dowd; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Wells). This definition does not account for nuances or disparities of national cultures or regional demographics, but it provides a widely accepted, practical conceptualization of agedness.

Existing data collection often does not disaggregate focus on older people in humanitarian crises, resulting in gaps in data (Karunakara and Stevenson 1). International humanitarian programs for adults have not been designed to pay attention to the different needs

of older people (Hutton 1). This tendency to aggregate younger adults and older adults works against the more vulnerable age group. People older than 60 are the fastest growing age group (Hutton 1) and older people will be affected by humanitarian crises than ever before (Karunakara and Stevenson 1).

Older people often suffer disproportionately in humanitarian crises due to their needs not being well understood (Karunakara and Stevenson 1). Older people are more likely to have impaired health or physical ability, which reduces their ability to handle new challenges (Hutton 5). In less wealthy countries, they tend to be disproportionately impoverished (Hutton 11). They also tend to be more isolated or socially marginalized (Hutton 13). Social isolation is exacerbated by humanitarian crises such as war which may prevent people from physically leaving their homes to carry out routine tasks of daily living like buying food, and destructive to community and personal relationships, often through the loss of loved ones (Hutton 13). Older women bear higher risks of becoming widowed, developing chronic health issues, and suffering from social exclusion (Hutton 19). They face a higher risk of becoming widowed than men due to their generally longer life expectancies (Hutton 18). Their greater risk of chronic health issues is tied to this longer life expectancy, but also the traditional burden of childbearing and feeding at their own expense (Bonita). Women tend to be economically and socially disadvantaged, and may rely on their husbands for economic and social opportunity (Hutton 18). The tendency to outlive their husbands that they may be dependent on in this sense, in addition to an emotional one, risks older women with social exclusion more often than men. These characteristics surrounding gender warrant acknowledgement of the particular risks to women in this age group, as they are another vulnerable group in times of crisis.

The vulnerability of older people in humanitarian crises does not preclude their agency. In humanitarian crises where older people are classified as more vulnerable with labels like “displaced” or “refugee,” it complicates viewing them on equal ground with other parties to the crisis. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’ “Policy on Older Refugees” identifies the need to see older refugees as agents with unique strengths:

While the plight of older refugees can be severe, they should not be seen only as passive, dependent recipients of assistance. This policy seeks to highlight that older refugees often serve as formal and informal leaders of communities; they are valuable resources for guidance and advice, and transmitters of culture, skills and crafts that are important in preserving the traditions of the dispossessed and displaced. Older refugees can and do make an active contribution to the well-being of their next-of-kin, and only become totally dependent in the final stages of frailty, disability and illness. Older persons have taken the lead in return to countries as far afield as Croatia and Liberia. Older persons can also contribute to peace and reconciliation measures. Good programming requires that these roles are utilized (2000).

Older people’s role as community leaders and actors should not be ignored when addressing humanitarian issues affecting older populations. Their input in the formation and implementation of solutions addressing their needs has proven to be invaluable. Their proximity to the issues in questions and localized knowledge are potent tools in crises. When older people are not involved in organizing humanitarian assistance through providing their input to organizations or governments, the unique needs of older people, such as healthcare and income shortages, tend to be left unmet (Hutton 22). This combination demonstrates the need to recognize the unique

situations of older people. The importance of addressing the needs of this age group will grow, just as will the consequences for failing to do so.

IV. Displaced Pensioners in Ukraine

Conflict in Ukraine affects a higher proportion of elderly people than anywhere else in the world (Simonyan). 30% of the 3.5 million people in need of humanitarian aid are older (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs “Global Humanitarian Overview” 33). In 2019, 88% of the patients of Doctors Without Borders clinics in the conflict zone were over the age of 50 (Simonyan). The clinics were not designed to accommodate the health needs of an older patient population (Simonyan). The chronic health conditions and disabilities of the elderly require specific equipment and expertise which are not present in regular clinics. The traditional tendency toward failure to meet the needs of older persons in humanitarian crises would thus have devastating consequences for some 1 million people.

The pension age in Ukraine is 60 (Plonka et al. 352; Social Security Administration). These ages outlined in the Ukrainian pension system align with the standard definitions of older people, making it possible to draw comparisons between the general discussion of older people in humanitarian crises in the previous section and the discussion of Ukrainian pensioners in this section.

The most prominent challenge posed by the Donbass conflict to displaced older people is the issue of pensions. Most displaced pensioners rely on their pensions as a source of income to live (Jaroszewicz): 99% of those surveyed by HelpAge stated that they rely on their pension as a source of income (HelpAge International). In November 2014, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the supreme executive body of the government (European Committee of the Regions), restricted pension rights, as well as rights to other social benefits, for citizens living in the

NGCA, affecting 1.2 million people (Norwegian Refugee Council “Spurned” 1). In October of the following year, the High Administrative Court of Ukraine issued a decision voiding the restrictions passed by the Cabinet of Ministers, but this has not been enforced (Norwegian Refugee Council “Spurned” 1). Pensioners in the NGCA were forced to register as displaced and either leave their homes to live in the GCA or make a monthly trip across the contact line to receive their benefits (Norwegian Refugee Council “Spurned” 1). The Cabinet of Ministers responded to this latter phenomenon in 2016 with more restrictions and the suspension of benefits for over half a million internally displaced people, until they could provide proof of residence in the GCA (Norwegian Refugee Council “Spurned” 1). The government has taken the right to power of attorney from those in the NGCA, preventing someone else from representing them in the GCA and receiving pension payments on their behalf (Norwegian Refugee Council “Spurned” 3). The Ukrainian government’s active restriction and suspension of its citizens’ rights to their pensions goes against the various international agreements Ukraine is a party to, including: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, International Labour Organization Social Security Convention No.102, the European Social Charter, and the European Convention on Human Rights (Norwegian Refugee Council “Spurned” 2). Each month, displaced pensioners are eligible to receive 1000 UAH, or about 36 USD, or slightly more than half of the minimum subsistence level in Ukraine as of December 2018 (Nieczypor 4). This policy is discriminatory and lacks legal basis (Nieczypor 4), it does not affect the pensions of those who are not displaced. Low pension payments and the barriers to receiving them result in severe income shortages for displaced pensioners (HelpAge International).

Displaced pensioners are the Ukrainian IDP group that is “in the most precarious socioeconomic situation” (Jaroszewicz). The situation continues to worsen for older people due to the prolonged conflict (HelpAge International). These vulnerabilities take many of the same forms as in other humanitarian crises. The situation is especially acute near the line of contact between the warring parties. Older people in the NGCA living near the conflict contact line described experiencing difficulty escaping the conflict, conflict-related mental health issues, severe income shortages, lack of access to healthcare, and lack of support for their disabilities (HelpAge International). The restricted income of the pensioners and higher rates of physical disability make the displaced pensioners less capable of relocating. Lower mobility and difficulty moving away for older people can lead to greater social isolation, as younger, more mobile family and community members move away to escape the fighting (HelpAge International). The lack of access to healthcare is relevant to older persons, as 97% surveyed had at least one chronic disease (HelpAge International). The lack of support for disabilities also affects the elderly, with over half of those individuals surveyed needing assistive devices for mobility (HelpAge International).

Older women face additional social, political, and economic challenges in Ukrainian society and these challenges have worsened in the context of the Donbass conflict (Simonyan). This includes issues with income, which have been complicated through pension restrictions, and community connectedness which has been disrupted through the conflict and absence or death of their husbands, younger members of the family, or members of the community. Older women living alone along the contact line have suffered abuse and violence (HelpAge International). At the same time, the decade-long gap in life expectancy between Ukrainian men and women directs attention to the situations of displaced older women and their unique health-care needs

(Simonyan). Globally, older women experience higher rates of dementia, cataracts, breast cancers, osteoporosis, and rheumatoid arthritis than men (Murray and Lopez). Doctors Without Borders clinics in the NGCA were unprepared to see a population of older patients that was 76% women (Simonyan) because they tend to have the mentioned chronic conditions at higher rates than older men. In designing aid for displaced older women, organizations and governments must consider these gender discrepancies in relation to age.

The sheer proportion of older people in need of humanitarian aid highlights the harm caused by insufficient consideration of the needs of older people. In addition to the direct effects on wellbeing, there are implications for peace. The absence of healthcare provided by the Ukrainian government may foster dislike or distrust of the Ukrainian government in displaced pensioners. On a community level in the non-government controlled areas, shifting attitudes in older women should not be underestimated. Almost half of the households in Ukraine were headed by women in 2007 (The World Bank), and over half of 4763 respondents to a humanitarian situation assessment of the general population of NGCA residents from August-September 2020 and December 2020-January 2021 reported female heads of household (REACH). Over half of heads of households surveyed were pensioners (REACH). Issues with pension access for these pensioners impact their household as well. This central role of women and pensioners in Donbass households should not be ignored, nor should the potential for displaced pensioners who are women to influence their households and communities.

The difficulties imposed on the displaced pensioners reflect a lack of will to protect their rights and wellbeing on the part of the Ukrainian government, rather than an inability to do so. The Ukrainian government does not want the IDPs to receive special treatment or become dependent on benefits if not needed (Uehling 4). The inaction to restore the rights of the

displaced, in particular the right to vote, reflects a fear of the more pro-West and pro-EU political elites in the GCA that the IDPs from the traditionally more pro-Russian Donbass region will vote against them (D'Anieri 101; Nieczypor 5). This further illustrates the displaced pensioners' critical role, although not one acquired through their own choice, as former and potential members of the electorate.

V. Conclusion

Older people experience humanitarian crises differently than younger people. Failure to consider the strengths and vulnerabilities of this demographic of older persons has led directly to their needs not being met. Their disadvantaged place within the Donbass conflict is emblematic of this distinction between age groups, and the challenges that crises pose to older people. The consequences of the conflict for the older IDPs also shows the tendency of policymakers and organizations to ignore this distinction. The result of this continuation of past failures is the largest population of older people in need of humanitarian aid in the world. To determine how displaced pensioners in Ukraine are important to achieving a lasting end to the violence, it is necessary to consider their status as older persons. In the following chapters, I work to demonstrate the importance of civil society in peacebuilding and the positive relationship between internally displaced persons, the elderly, and peacebuilding.

Chapter 3: Peace and the Internally Displaced

I. Introduction

The impact of a conflict on internally displaced people is extensive, and a great deal of importance rests on support and policy provided to them during and after the peace process. This chapter looks at the involvement of internally displaced people on different levels, from the grassroots level to formal negotiations, to assess an ideal path for the displaced into peacemaking. I then discuss the situation of the displaced in Ukraine, including the makeup of the displaced and the unusual considerations involved in the context of the Donbass conflict. Next, I outline the current role of the displaced in the peace process. These steps will enable me, by the end of the chapter, to place the displaced pensioners in Ukraine in the context of peace work of IDPs elsewhere, and to determine prospects for their roles in ending the Donbass conflict. I argue that displacement issues are issues of peace, and that displaced civil society actors are prime advocates for effective policy promoting durable solutions to such issues due to the demonstrated success of the displaced and civil society actors in peace processes. Moreover, I find support that the primary path for the displaced into peace processes in terms of efficacy are the track-two civil society initiatives due to their inclusivity and capacity to influence to the track-one and track-three actors.

II. Displacement and Peace Globally

The task of implementing durable solutions for the displaced is linked to peace and peacebuilding. A “durable solution” is reached when “internally displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement.” (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 5). A durable solution can result in the IDP integrating in the place

that they fled, to a nearby refuge, or elsewhere in the country (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 5). Ending the cause of displacement, returning to the place of origin, or moving elsewhere do not alone constitute durable solutions (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 5). Resolving issues of displacement requires understanding the unique needs of the displaced. IDPs have had success in advocating for displacement issues on all levels of peace processes. The dominant means for considering levels of peace processes is Lederach's 'Pyramid' Model (Federer et al. 9), which separates peace processes into three levels, or tracks: top leadership (track one), middle-range leadership (track two), and grassroots leadership (track three) (Lederach). The three distinct categories are a useful conceptual tool for categorizing different elements of the peace process, but the simplicity of the tracks do not necessarily reflect the reality of local variance and perceptions (Federer et al. 9). Interpeace, an INGO which supports local peacebuilding initiatives around the world, argues that:

Connecting the 'tracks' can help societies move towards a situation in which high-level policies are informed by the knowledge and experience of local communities and civil society, and which therefore reflect local realities. Additionally, local communities and civil society are likely to have a better understanding of the way high-level policies are conceived.' (Interpeace)

Lederach points out that there are inherent risks to linking processes between tracks, such as retaliation or other consequences for grassroots actors (Lederach). The displaced pensioners can help work toward peace on all three of Lederach's tracks, each one entailing the following promises and limitations.

Track-one participation is the least-inclusive level. It can be understood as "an instrument of foreign policy for the establishment and development of contacts between the

governments of different states through the use of intermediaries mutually recognized by the respective parties” (de Magalhães 59; Mapendere 67). This includes diplomats, high-ranking government officials, heads of states, and international organizations (Mapendere 67). Track-one actors enjoy political power (e.g. military force) to influence the peace processes (Sanders), high access to resources to utilize (Bercovitch and Houston), intelligence on the other parties (Crocker), and knowledge of foreign policies of parties involved (Mapendere 67). The power at stake in track-one negotiations also constitutes a limitation. State interests in power can conflict with interests of weaker parties, threatening long-term peace (Diamond and MacDonald). Dialogue between track-one parties also tends to halt at the heights of conflict, when it could otherwise serve the most benefit (Ziegler 27). Track-one representatives are also limited by the policies and interests of their nation or organization (Sanders; Volkan), rendering track-one processes susceptible to electoral cycles in democracies (Mapendere 68).

The disadvantages of the displaced make it more difficult for them to participate in these track-one processes (Koser 20). Documented direct participation of the displaced in these high-level negotiations is limited (Koser 19). However, the success of refugees and some IDPs in the 1987-1992 Guatemalan peace process yielded promising results (Worby 18). During the conflict in 1982, at the height of internal displacement of Guatemalans, one out of every five Guatemalans was internally displaced (totaling around 1.5 million people) (Worby 17). Just as the displaced Ukrainian pensioners from the NGCA are stigmatized as pro-Russian or pro-separatist (Nieczypor 5; Uehling 3), the displaced Guatemalans were framed by the the Guatemalan government as sympathizers to the insurgency (Worby 17). Still, those displaced by the conflict in Guatemala organized around land issues, garnered support from international organizations, and reached concrete agreements with the government (Worby 17).

At the same time, the case of Guatemala and the advocacy for land issues was centered around refugees who fled to Mexico and their repatriation, rather than around IDPs (Worby 17). Their place outside of the country of conflict may have enabled them to organize more effectively, and without obstacles imposed by either party to the conflict. It was the organization of refugees outside of Guatemala which established the initial dialogue with the government and led to a peace agreement promoting repatriation and international aid for the rights and security of refugees (Worby 18). The involvement of the displaced also is “often judged a best-case scenario,” and their ability to enter dialogue and exert influence over the government was reliant on visible international support (Worby 17). Of particular note is the involvement of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which placed consistent international pressure on the Guatemalan government (Worby 18). IDPs are not afforded the same rights and protections internationally as refugees, and are given less formal legal protections (Koser 13), despite IDPs outnumbering refugees globally and their numbers continuing to rise (Wells 5).

“Track Two Diplomacy” was conceptualized by Montville in 1991 (Volkan) as “unofficial, informal interaction between members of adversary groups or nations that aim to develop strategies, to influence public opinion, organize human and material resources in ways that might help resolve their conflict” (Montville 162). Track-two actors include NGOs and INGOs working in peace processes and peacebuilding (Mapendere 67). In other words, they are organizations who focus on conflict resolution and/or humanitarian issues (Mapendere 76). Compared to track-one actors, they tend to be less limited by formal rules to express their views and less beholden to electorates (Mapendere 68). They are effective in pre- and post-conflict peacebuilding and include grassroots and middle leadership, and can give disadvantaged groups a voice in the peace process (Mapendere 68). That said, compared to track-one actors they have

far less political and economic power, are less accountable to the public, and are known for coordination issues (Mapendere 68-69). The peacebuilding interventions used may take too long to solve immediate issues, have limited influence during violent conflict, and are less effective in advocating against authoritarian governments (Mapendere 68).

IDPs have advocated through track-two coalitions, often joining with women's groups (Koser 22). Joining with other interest groups may be a more effective strategy for IDPs because IDPs themselves may be viewed with antagonism by parts of society, dispersed and disconnected socially (Koser 20; UNHCR "Older Persons"). This strategy affords the displaced with more power due to international support and broader appeal (Koser 22). The United Nations Development Fund for Women supports the work of women's groups engaging in peacebuilding (United Nations Development Fund for Women 18). Women's track-two organizations have experienced influence and success in Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Somalia (United Nations Development Fund for Women 19). In Liberia, women organized to form Women of Liberia Mass Action for peace, a diverse, national coalition of women who demonstrated peacefully against the war, orchestrated meetings between the track-one actors, ran a voter education and turnout campaign, and facilitated post-conflict disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (Council on Foreign Relations "Liberia"). This case of Liberia's Second Civil War shows the power and influence that the numbers a broader coalition brings. This, coupled with the added international and legal support gained from joining with a larger coalition, such as support from the United Nations Development Fund for Women, can be instrumental to the successful advocacy of the displaced.

At the same time, this method may not be the most efficient means for addressing issues related to displacement, since the coalition's more diverse majority interests reduce the focus on

interests specific to IDPs. Although almost two million Liberians, or half of the population, were displaced during the four-year conflict (Council on Foreign Relations “Liberia”; Dabo 6), displacement was not a focus of the ultimate peace talks between the Liberian government and two rebel movements (Dabo 6-7). The IDPs were not represented by track-two organizations, and the final peace agreement did not reference IDPs (Dabo 7). Their representation in the peace process was hindered by government intimidation and perception as unrepresentative and impartial if selected to take part in dialogue (Dabo 7).

Track-three processes are the most accessible and inclusive (Koser 23), and may be appealing to displaced people as a result. People can use grassroots strategies to create dialogue across conflicting groups and empower external peacebuilding interventions with local knowledge (Koser 23-24). One documented case of IDP participation in track-three processes involves IDPs in Angola organizing dialogue groups and performances in theatre and radio on displacement issues to promote local reconciliation (Koser 24). However, McHugh notes that cases like this are the exception, and rather it is more common that “there is no clear impact of ‘track-three’ processes upon national level peace processes, and alone they cannot be argued to be a reliably effective way to ensure that IDP concerns are represented in full-scale peace processes or agreements” (24). IDPs are likely to have less influence than more powerful actors due to their circumstances, could be threatened as a result of their political involvement, and may end up represented by displaced persons who do not align with the larger group (Koser 24-25). Just as important is prioritizing the needs of IDPs in the larger peace processes and ensuring their legal rights (Koser 26-27).

III. Displacement in Ukraine

How many are internally displaced in Ukraine?

Most IDPs registered with Ukraine's Ministry of Social Policy are located in the non-government-controlled oblasts Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kharkivska, with large numbers also located in Kyiv (UNHCR "Registration"). Half of the nearly 1.5 million registered as displaced are pensioners (UNHCR "Registration"). It is unclear whether the actual number of displaced people is higher, due to the desire to avoid bureaucracy for little reward (Ivashchenk-Stadnik), or lower, due to the pensioners residing in the NGCA needing to register as displaced in order to continue receiving their pensions (Nieczypor; Uehling). An estimate by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, used by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, puts the number of people in Ukraine who have been uprooted from their homes between 730,000 and 1 million (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center). Official displacement slowed in 2019, but the total number of people displaced remains high (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center).

Old Age and Pension Issues

Since 2016, older people living in NGCA have been required by the Ukrainian government to register as internally displaced to receive their vital pension benefits (Jaroszweicz). These displaced pensioners must traverse the conflict line to receive their payments in a Ukrainian-controlled zone (Stern). They may be unable to integrate into communities in the GCA due insufficient financial means (Protection Cluster Ukraine 10). Of the million contact line crossings each month, half were carried out by people over the age of 60 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center). The situation of the displaced remains dire, despite

limited efforts by the Ukrainian government to serve them (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center).

At the onset of the conflict, Ukraine did not have institutions or laws to serve internally displaced people (Nieczypor 2). In October 2014, Ukraine passed the Act Securing the Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons, which only guaranteed the right to return once the causes of displacement went away (Nieczypor 2). After international pressure, in December 2014 the law was amended to encourage return or reintegration of IDPs (Nieczypor 2). In July 2015, the Ukrainian government adopted the framework “Principal areas for solving problems of employment of internally displaced persons for 2015–2016”, which remained unfunded until its expiration at the end of 2016 (Nieczypor 2). At the end of 2015, the Ukrainian government adopted the “Comprehensive State Scheme for Aid, Social Adaptation and Reintegration of Ukrainian Citizens moved from Temporarily Occupied Territory and Regions in which Anti-Terrorist Operations are being conducted to Other Regions of Ukraine in the period up until 2017,” for which no funding was provided (Nieczypor 3). A new ministry, the Ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territory and Internally Displaced Persons, was formed in 2016, but has not suggested any form of legislation related to IDPs” (Nieczypor 3). In 2018, the government approved “Plan for Measures to implement the Internally Displaced Person Integration Strategy and Long-Term Measures concerning Internal Displacement in the period up until 2020,” which gave suggestions to state institutions for dealing with internal displacement (Nieczypor 3).

IV. Incorporating the Displaced into the Peace Process

Since June 2020, the Ukrainian government has incorporated displaced people from the non-government-controlled areas as appointed representatives in the formal peace process in Minsk as part of their delegation (The Presidential Office of Ukraine). This development,

although a significant signal of attention to the interests and inclusion of the displaced in the peace process, may be insufficient or even harmful in addressing the needs of the displaced pensioners. The Ukrainian government-appointed representatives include two prominent journalists who fled Donetsk and a prominent lawyer and head of an NGO who fled Luhansk (The Presidential Office of Ukraine). These representatives may be unable or unwilling to represent the interests of the displaced pensioners, as they are all successful, working professionals who have been selected by the Ukrainian government to voice their views in the peace talks. The representatives have left Donetsk and Luhansk, whereas most IDPs in Ukraine remain in the NGCA, as do most displaced pensioners (UNHCR “Registration”). They do not have the experience existing in the NGCA and grappling with pension issues, and their age and socioeconomic status places them at a relative advantage for integration into the GCA. Their selection by the Ukrainian delegation may not have been based on their views reflecting those in the NGCA. The experiences of the displaced in the NGCA, the majority of whom are pensioners, differ from those who have moved to the GCA. The presence of unrepresentative delegates to peace negotiations could lead to the needs of displaced pensioners not being addressed.

V. Conclusion

The success of internally displaced people in peace processes and peacebuilding in other cases, both for advocating for displacement issues and for contributing to lasting peace, works to illustrate the ways that the displaced pensioners in Ukraine may do the same. However, the displaced pensioners are limited as agents for their own advocacy and for reconciliation due to their financial, political, and social constraints. Their insufficient incomes in the form of their pension benefits, obstacles to voting, and perceptions by political elites and broader society in the GCA limit their ability to exert influence on a wider level. Still, the engagement with IDPs

on all broad levels of society and the peace process demonstrates large potential for the displaced as advocates for issues specific to displacement, which, in turn, promote durable solutions for peacebuilding.

Chapter 4: Civil Society and Peacebuilding

I. Introduction

The internally displaced pensioners in Ukraine are disadvantaged in many ways and have had little role in formal negotiations between the heads of state or state representatives. The peace processes thus far have primarily involved peace talks between national representatives of Ukraine and Russia, and mediators such as France, Germany, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (BBC “Pro-Russia Rebels”).

This chapter will first outline the concept of bottom-up peacebuilding, its importance, and how it takes shape. Next, I will explore the avenues of potential for bottom-up peacebuilding practices involving the internally displaced pensioners in Ukraine. By examining the relationship between civil society and peacebuilding, I will draw insight into the paths available to the displaced pensioners. I argue that a bottom-up peacebuilding approach in the context of Ukraine provides an important contribution to the prospect of ending the conflict, but that it is ultimately limited in its capabilities.

II. Bottom-Up Peacebuilding

Why is it important?

The “bottom-up” approach to peacebuilding focuses on working from the grassroots level of society to effect sustainable change upwards through organizations and civil-society initiatives, all the way to the top levels of leadership and formal negotiation processes (LeFranc 1). This approach contrasts with top-down peace processes, such as those led by international peace institutions which work to implement large-scale solutions. Criticism of top-down peace processes points to their biases and limited capabilities for forming localized solutions (MacGinty “Indigenous” 157-159). Representatives of state interests may seek power for the

state over benefits for the population or welfare for minority groups. Despite the resources of track-one actors, their ability to gather and use knowledge particular to smaller groups or areas tends to be more limited than track-two or track-three actors. The participating institutions and individuals in these top levels of leadership may lack the capability to address the complexity of the conflict and tensions due to sociopolitical distance between themselves and minority groups.

The bottom-up approach to peacemaking relates to the displaced pensioners in Ukraine because they are a disadvantaged group of civilians who are for the most part left out of the institutions of track one and track two as a result of their age and status. This approach makes participation on the track-two level the most accessible. From there, following a bottom-up approach, the displaced pensioners may be able to work to influence change “upwards” in society. A study of 83 peace agreements 1989-2004 indicated that inclusion of civil society in peace settlements increases the durability of peace (Nilsson) through broadening the discourse to underlying causes of the conflict and promote a sense of ownership to civil society actors (Paffenholz 70). Paffenholz finds that it is possible to include civil society in peace negotiations without decreasing their effectiveness through examining these cases with civil society involvement. This civil-society-inclusive approach may lend the possibility for more localized, thorough solutions to the conflict and its tensions through the levels of access and knowledge available to the displaced pensioners relative to the Ukrainian government or international actors. This may reduce the “structural violence,” or social injustice in the societal system, (Galtung) present after the conflict, and reducing the divisions in society and the likelihood for a resumption of conflict.

What does it look like?

Civil society can be understood as: “organizations that take voluntary collective action around shared interests, purposes, and values and that are distinct from those of the state, family, and the market” (Paffenholz 70). This includes, but is not limited to: trade unions, professional associations, human rights groups, faith-based organizations, research institutions, social movements, and peace-building NGOs, as well as traditional and community groups” (Paffenholz 70). Civil society actors in processes serve functions such as advocacy and socialization (Paffenholz 74). Grassroots peacemaking allows for flexible solutions and greater attention to culture (MacGinty “Indigenous” 159). A form of bottom-up agency (MacGinty 55), the term “everyday peace” can be understood as “the practices and norms deployed by individuals in deeply divided societies to avoid and minimize conflict and awkward situations at both inter- and intragroup levels” (553). It takes several forms: avoidance, ambiguity, ritualized politeness, telling, and blame deferring (MacGinty 556). These practices can be effective tools for keeping peace, compared to strategies imposed from above (MacGinty 561). Richmond describes the potential for a peace constructed together by local and regional or global actors (53). This relationship, when balanced, offers the specialized knowledge of grassroots actors and the powerful mechanisms of international institutions (Richmond 62).

III. Everyday Peace

The displaced pensioners must practice peacebuilding skills to survive in either the NGCA or the GCA. Those crossing the contact line regularly to receive benefits (Stern) are required to develop these everyday peace practices. Others have moved from the NGCA to cities in the East, such as Kyiv (UNHCR “Registration”). To integrate themselves into the new communities requires significant exercises of everyday peace. Pensioners who have integrated

into new communities in the GCA have needed to find housing and often employment, for the most part without the support of the Ukrainian authorities. Most (62%) feel they have successfully integrated into these new communities (Nieczypor 3). The limited to no support from the Ukrainian government, coupled with discriminatory policy, (Nieczypor 2-3) provides an obstacle to their integration. Rather, the displaced pensioners themselves must work with NGOs and the local residents in order to move into these new communities (Nieczypor 5).

IV. Conclusion

Traditional top-down approaches to achieving peace in the Donbass conflict have been consistently unsuccessful as seen through the violations of agreements by both sides and 2021 escalation of the conflict. The advent of elections to the NGCA marks a significant change in the peace process, but the outlook for the elections in relation to peace remains pessimistic. Over a year later, the elections have not progressed. Displaced pensioners have been crossing between the opposing sides since the beginning of the conflict. They have the capacity to live in divided communities, and the potential affect the state of the larger conflict through civil society initiatives.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

I. Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the potential of internally displaced pensioners in Ukraine to contribute to lasting peace in the Donbass conflict. The previous three chapters established the background knowledge needed to evaluate answers to this question. Chapter Two discussed the identities of the displaced pensioners of “displaced” and older.” Next, Chapter Three examined the role of internally displaced groups in other peace processes. Chapter Four outlined the relationship between civil society and peacebuilding. These chapters applied their subjects to the Donbass conflict and the displaced pensioners, and offered conclusions.

This chapter will consider the findings of the previous chapters together, and use them to determine overarching conclusions. First, I review the analyses of the previous three chapters. I then discuss these findings as they relate to one another and the research question, and draw the main conclusions from this discussion. The final section of the chapter includes acknowledgements of the thesis’s limitations, as well as suggestions for future research.

II. Review of Findings

Significance of Agedness and Displacement

Older people, such as the displaced pensioners, experience humanitarian crises differently than younger people in the same crises. This aspect of vulnerability and distinction has been ignored in research, aid, and policy making. Neglecting special considerations for older persons has led to their needs being left unmet. The situation that the Ukrainian pensioners find themselves in is emblematic of this historical oversight, and has contributed to creating the humanitarian crisis impacting the largest population of older people in the world today. To bring effective and comprehensive solutions to the needs of the displaced pensioners, consideration of

their connected identities as displaced and older is key. Involving them in the processes which create these policies that affect them helps to introduce this necessary insight.

Displacement and Peace

Internally displaced people have had success in peace processes on the three “tracks” of society across a diverse spectrum of conflicts across the world, both in advocating for peace and for displacement issues, two issues which are intertwined. Their successes demonstrate the potential for the displaced in Ukraine to act as their own advocates and agents for peacebuilding work. Still, it is necessary to acknowledge the inherent limitations of displaced pensioners to act as their own advocates and agents for reconciliation. There are vulnerabilities tied to their statuses as displaced and older. Within the context of Ukraine, this is correlated with limited financial and sociopolitical means. The below-subsistence-level income of the vast majority of displaced pensioners in the conflict zone to only pension benefits (HelpAge International; Nieczypor 4), inability to take part in formal political institutions through voting, and negative attitudes among Ukrainian society and political elites toward them impede their potential to exercise power and influence in forming Ukrainian national policy. At the same time, the displaced pensioners’ engagement throughout diverse levels and geographic areas of society places them in a unique and pivotal position for dialogue.

Civil Society and Peacebuilding

The socially divisive nature of the conflict in Ukraine has complicated and continues to complicate attempts to bring about an end to the conflict and agreement upon sustainable, popular solutions. The top-down peace work has provided several agreements over the years, and has involved the national leadership of Ukraine, Russia, Germany, and France. This formal peace process, although successful to some extent in stagnating the violence, have failed to reach

through the war-torn communities. The formal peace processes which remain in motion have sparked pessimism and discontent in Western Ukrainian society. Neither an end to the violence nor sustainable, peacebuilding solutions appear to be imminent. This failure of traditional top-down approaches has persisted in the midst of both this violence and a massive humanitarian crisis which only grows worse due to inaction and discrimination. Bottom-up peacebuilding strategies have proven successful, including those involving the displaced.

One of the groups that has been most affected by the Donbass conflict since its onset are the displaced pensioners. Their struggle has been defined in part by their reliance on pension payments for subsistence, and their difficulty in accessing those payments resulting from the conflict. Though often not uprooted from their homes directly by armed conflict, the pensioners residing in the non-government-controlled areas had to register as internally displaced and cross the conflict's contact line in order to receive their meager pensions each month. This act of crossing regularly between the East and West of Ukraine, the government-controlled areas and separatist-controlled areas, has forced them to gain experience and develop practices which allow them to safely traverse the conflict border. In order to live, the displaced pensioners have needed to directly confront obstacles such as prejudice and antagonistic attitudes toward them from those in the government-controlled areas. Both the displaced pensioners who make the arduous journey across the border each month, as well as those who have permanently relocated to the government-controlled areas, have had to confront these obstacles. The latter group have had to acclimate to their new environments and the prejudices against them, and to work with communities and NGOs to remedy the conditions of their displacement and age.

III. Discussion and Conclusions

In this thesis, I argued that the role of displaced pensioners in promoting lasting peace should involve their work in civil society and formal peace processes, and that their identities should be viewed together and given unique attention in national and international policy and agreements. To determine the merits of this position, I looked at the research on older people and displaced populations in humanitarian crises such violent conflict, and the role of civil society and displacement in peace processes and peacebuilding.

My research found support for the necessity of providing the displaced pensioners with increased consideration in the context of the conflict. Their vulnerable statuses as displaced and older are associated with distinct needs and challenges, as determined in cases elsewhere in the world and by the literature on the current conflict. Seven years into the Donbass conflict, many of these unique and critical needs remain unmet, such as access to healthcare for chronic health conditions and to pension payments needed to survive. Throughout the conflict, the national policies of Ukraine have discriminated against displaced pensioners by hindering their access to their income and right to formal political participation. Addressing the pensioners' issues of displacement will work to shift discourse around those from the NGCA, foster more positive sentiments toward the Ukrainian government among those in the NGCA, and empower displaced pensioners in their intermediary roles.

The involvement of the displaced in track-two peace processes has been successful in contributing to the creation of durable solutions, which are essential to a sustainable peace, and the inclusion of older people in addressing their own needs promotes a better understanding of how to do so. I found evidence of large-scale, substantive successes of groups involving IDPs in the advocacy for peace and displacement issues. Limited success in advocacy work is seen on all

levels of Lederach's tracks, although bottom-up avenues through track-two coalitions remain the most accessible to the displaced due to the added international and socioeconomic support that the act of joining the broader coalition brings, combined with the relative lack of international and socioeconomic support specific to IDPs both internationally and in Ukraine. Involving the displaced pensioners in these processes serves to represent their issues in peace work, despite significant limitations incurred through coalescing with the diverse track-two coalition interests.

Durable solutions to displacement issues create a more sustainable peace by resolving issues of integration or reintegration and fostering reconciliation. If displacement issues are not addressed, then only a negative peace may be achieved. These conditions would leave unresolved or worsen the divisions in society central to the conflict. The displaced pensioners coming from the Donbass, a region historically distinct in its politically pro-Russian views from the parts of Ukraine to its west, would be inclined to be less content with the peace agreement, feel less a part of the Ukrainian nation, and be more opposed to the Ukrainian government. Addressing the social injustices constructed by the Ukrainian government against the displaced pensioners will progress reconciliation between the displaced pensioners, the Ukrainian government, and Ukrainian society. The old age of the displaced pensioners demands attention on top of this due to the vulnerabilities and strength demonstrated in the experiences of older people in humanitarian crises in Ukraine and elsewhere.

The involvement of Ukrainian displaced pensioners should not, however, be limited to advocacy for displacement or pension issues. The ability for IDPs to integrate and engage with both sides of the conflict places them in a unique cultural context. Their places in society, although in a sense involuntary, positions them as intermediaries in the conflict. The displaced pensioners residing in NGCA are required to pass into the GCA monthly to receive their

payments (Stern). This journey takes a high toll on them, through exposure to the elements due to the long wait times, the energy expended through travelling, the expenses incurred along the way, and the stress of moving through the land-mined war zone (Norwegian Refugee Council “Ukraine”; Stern). 96% of 4,595 older people living near the contact line surveyed by HelpAge International reported suffering from “conflict-related mental health issues” (HelpAge International). The process of entering the GCA requires them to confront opposing sentiments, through the crossing of checkpoints (Stern), whereas other groups in Ukraine are not compelled to do the same.

The urgency of identifying and implementing alternative strategies for promoting a lasting peace in Ukraine is only growing. Traditional top-down approaches to peacemaking have failed to bring an end to the violence, and they have failed to meet the needs and desires of Ukrainian society. In many ways, the displaced pensioners have experienced this conflict differently than other Ukrainians. The lack of accessibility to government services, such as healthcare and pension payments, has proven to be disruptive to their lives. It has resulted in their disproportionate burden of trauma, poverty, and death. Their conditions continue to grow more dire.

IV. Final Thoughts

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The peculiarities of the displaced pensioners’ situations complicate their study and consideration. There are certain, overarching characteristics which are by definition true to their situations or true for the vast majority of them to varying degrees. Conditions true for the majority of them include chronic health conditions and lack of mobility associated with old age and the reliance on pension payments as a primary source of income. That said, the population of

pensioners in Ukraine displaced by the Donbass conflict is heterogenous. Although most reside somewhere in the two separatist-controlled provinces, they are dispersed throughout Ukraine. These two aspects of their identities, old age and pensioner status, are important, and even more so when forming policy and agreements. However, they are only two aspects of each individual's person. Within the division between those displaced pensioners relocated to the GCA and those residing in the NGCA, individual situations vary. Generalizability and utility of the findings of this thesis should be interpreted with this in mind.

A central limitation of this thesis was the relative lack of literature on its population identities of interest. The manner in which age categories have been considered in research has long ignored the distinctive qualities of older adults or the elderly (Hutton; Karunakura), resulting in many gaps in the literature on older populations in conflicts and peacebuilding. On the other hand, displaced populations have received more attention in research, albeit only since the 1990s (Mooney 1). There remains the issue of this research, however, of only exploring how the displaced are vulnerable or victims to humanitarian crises, leaving little exploration of how they have worked in formal or informal settings as changemakers. The same tendency holds true for literature on older populations as well. I am interested in seeing more research on the experiences of IDPs and older people in other conflicts as agents for advocacy and change.

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