



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



## Definition of a War Volunteer

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### Abstract

The article deals with the issue of war volunteers, and the main research problem is included in the question: How is the concept of a war volunteer defined? The subject of the research is the definition of a war volunteer in the available literature. The aim of the research is to indicate the definition of a war volunteer. In the course of the research, the method of critical analysis of literature was used. The Great Dictionary of the Polish Language includes two concepts: "volunteer" and "volunteer". In the dictionary of the Polish language, you can find the term "volunteer" and the term "war". The article also addresses the interchangeable use of the terms "war volunteer" and "mercenary". The research results allow to draw a conclusion: the definition of a war volunteer should be supplemented with the issue of membership of the armed forces of the conflict side.

**Keywords:** War Volunteer; Mercenary; War; Definition.

### 1. Introduction

The definition of a war volunteer has been somewhat forgotten for Europeans. The concept began to reappear in the media in connection with the war in Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022 with the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Citizens of various countries watched with horror in the media the brutal nature of the war, human tragedies and the enormity of destruction. Volunteers began to report to help. The initial influx of volunteers were Ukrainians. Over time, the International Legion of Territorial Defense of the Armed Forces of Ukraine was established, to which citizens of foreign countries were recruited. The aim of the article is to indicate the definition of a war volunteer. So far, the topic of war volunteers has rarely been discussed. The results of research on the definition of a war volunteer are not known. The method of critical analysis of literature was chosen for the research as the most accurate in the search for a definition of a war volunteer. There is no such definition in the sources used by the author.

### 2. Materials and methods

The method of critical analysis of literature, which was used in the research procedure, is, according to K. Żegnalek, a method that aims to embed the problem in the existing achievements of a given science. "It is necessary to show what has been done so far in a given field, what are the views of various scientists on this matter" [1]. Below are the results of the research procedure.

### 3. Results and discussion

The Great Dictionary of the Polish Language, when explaining the term war volunteer, takes into account two concepts: "ochotnik" (volunteer) and "ochotniczka" (female volunteer). It defines a volunteer as "a man who joined the army

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without being drafted" [2] and a female volunteer as "a woman who volunteered for the army" [3]. Both explanations retain the same meaning.

In the dictionary of the Polish language, we find the term "ochotnik" (volunteer) and the term "wojenny" (war). A volunteer means "a person who volunteers to participate in something" [4] while the adjective "wojenny" is explained as "concerning war, connected with war, existing or used during war, being a result of war; such as in war, characteristic of war; combat, military" [5]. By combining these two meanings, we can conclude that this volunteer concerns war, so a war volunteer is a person who volunteers to participate in war.

Within the framework of the undertaken topic, it is worth referring to the term "mercenary". Sometimes the terms "volunteer" and "mercenary" are used interchangeably. There is no scientific literature that compares both concepts. Admittedly, there are book items that bring the area of mercenaries closer, but there is no such literature on the subject of volunteers and the differences or similarities between these two concepts. Before the comparison is presented, it will be explained who the mercenaries are. According to the dictionary of the Polish language, a mercenary is "a soldier serving in a foreign army for money" [6]. It is also possible to express oneself in this way contemptuously about people who undertake unworthy services for money, in this case - killing. L. Sosnowski presents more terms and definitions in his book "Mercenaries" [7]. He defines mercenarism as "the activity of individual people recruited to conduct armed activities of a military nature in a foreign country" [8]. The author also cites other interchangeable terms, such as "wild geese", "dogs of war", "soldiers of fortune", "courtesans of war". Sosnowski mentions in his work that among the mercenaries we can find professional soldiers, war veterans, people who want to make mercenarism their profession, but also many "derailments", with seriously deformed personalities, often sadists, criminals, adventurers, many who have fled their countries who boast of a not very honorable past.

Taking the above into consideration, a mercenary is a volunteer who fights for money. It would seem that the terms "volunteer" and "mercenary" are similar and can be used interchangeably. However, referring to the literature, we first encounter the term "mercenaries". Nowadays, we often hear about volunteers. If we are talking about the same people, why has the term evolved? In the author's opinion, the reason is, among others, bad associations. As mentioned earlier, mercenaries were often criminals or people with personality problems, so who would want to be perceived that way by society, especially since money is not the only motivation to be a volunteer today. Increasingly, the motive for joining volunteer forces are ideals, certain values that volunteers are guided by, and the desire to help. A volunteer has a good association, a mercenary has a bad one.

An example of how volunteers view being called mercenaries can be seen in the statement of Lieutenant Pawinski: "(...) I wanted to say from my side, remember that this is not only a war of Ukrainians. It is also in our interest that the Russians do not manage to defeat Ukraine. Do not treat people in the Legion as mercenaries or people who came here to kill for fun, because such people leave very quickly. Mainly idealists and usually good people stay. Many of us die and certainly not for money, but for an idea (...)" [9]. The lieutenant died in the war in Ukraine as a military volunteer. He served in the International Legion of Territorial Defense of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

The Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), done at Geneva on 8 June 1977, can help to distinguish between the concepts of "mercenary" and "volunteer" [10]. Article 47 deals with the definition of "mercenary." According to the Protocol, a mercenary is a person who:

- "is specially recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in an armed conflict;
- does, in fact, take a direct part in the hostilities;
- is motivated to take part in the hostilities essentially by the desire for private gain and, in fact, is promised, by or on behalf of a Party to the conflict, material compensation substantially in excess of that promised or paid to combatants of similar ranks and functions in the armed forces of that Party;
- is neither a national of a Party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a Party to the conflict;
- is not a member of the armed forces of a Party to the conflict; and
- has not been sent by a State which is not a Party to the conflict on official duty as a member of its armed forces" [11].

It's worth considering point 5, which may highlight the difference between volunteers and mercenaries. Mercenaries are not part of the armed forces of a party to the conflict. Therefore, someone who volunteers for war and is incorporated into the army of the country they volunteer for cannot be called a mercenary. This leaves the term "volunteer." Is this what happens in practice?

The war in Ukraine can serve as an example. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky created a new separate unit consisting of foreigners – the International Legion of Territorial Defense of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. According to the Regulations of Military Service in the Armed Forces for Foreigners and Stateless Persons, approved by the Decree of the President of Ukraine dated June 10, 2016, No. 248, foreigners have the right to enlist in the Armed Forces on a voluntary basis, including in the Territorial Defense Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

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#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the gathered research material, the following conclusion can be drawn: the definition of a military volunteer should be supplemented with the issue of membership in the armed forces of a party to the conflict. In summary, a military volunteer is a person who voluntarily enlists to participate in a war and belongs to the armed forces of the country to which they volunteered. The motive for volunteering is often ideals, values other than the desire for financial gain.

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- [11] Ibid., p. 24.