

Ukraine's New Mobilisation Law: A Step Towards Strengthening the Military Amidst Russian Aggression

Introduction

On 16 April 2024, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a new mobilisation law aimed at addressing the country's pressing manpower issues within the armed forces. The law, which came into force on 18 May 2024, aims to address the country's pressing manpower issues within the armed forces amid the ongoing Russian invasion. However, it has been criticised for not addressing the topic of demobilisation for the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians who have been serving since the onset of the full-scale Russian invasion more than two years ago.[\[1\]](#)

Key Provisions

- The law introduces an online registry for recruits, making it easier to identify and manage conscripts.[\[2\]](#)
- The age for draft eligibility has been lowered from 27 to 25, expanding the pool of potential conscripts.[\[3\]](#)
- Men of military age must update their registration details within 60 days of the law entering into force, either at regional offices or via an online portal.
- Citizens must carry their military registration documents and present them upon request or when applying for a passport.[\[4\]](#)
- The law abolishes mandatory conscription for Ukrainian men aged 18 or older, replacing it with basic military training for all men starting from September 2025.
- The law offers financial perks for people who volunteer to fight in the army and sign an army contract, including certificates to buy a vehicle and financial assistance for first mortgage payments.
- Penalties for evading mobilisation include modest fines and the potential revocation of driver's licenses, with fines for draft evasion increased fivefold.
- The law does not extend to military-age females, although many Ukrainian women do choose to enlist in the armed forces voluntarily.[\[5\]](#)
- The law does not have clear deadlines for demobilisation, but it provides for discharge from military service under certain circumstances.
- The law allows people who have been convicted and given a suspended sentence to serve in the army.
- Authorities will be able to seize vehicles from citizens and enterprises for the army's needs.

The implications of Ukraine's new mobilisation law are far-reaching and complex. The law introduces an online registry for recruits, making it easier to identify and manage conscripts, and lowers the age for draft eligibility, expanding the pool of potential conscripts. As stated earlier, the criticism of Ukraine's new mobilization law centres around its failure to address the

demobilization of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians who have been serving since the onset of the full-scale Russian invasion more than two years ago. The law also provides financial perks for people who volunteer to fight in the army and sign an army contract, although some could question Ukraine's ability to afford such incentives. The law's failure to address demobilisation has eroded trust in the government, further driving the desire to flee among soldiers who have been fighting since the beginning of the full-scale invasion. The law could lead to the closure of businesses if the military drafts too many workers, disrupting the economy, and essential municipal services, such as heating and utility repairs, will be affected.

The legislation is seen as a key step in Ukraine's efforts to reform its military recruitment process and meet the unprecedented challenges posed by Russia's ongoing invasion, with Russia reportedly aiming to sign up hundreds of thousands of additional troops in preparation for a major summer offensive. Ukraine is racing against the clock to strengthen its military before Russia's summer offensive can fully unfold, with the new mobilisation law being seen as a key step in this effort.

Business and Economic Implications

The Ukrainian new mobilisation law has significant business and economic implications. Businesses will have to provide 'Notification', which includes summoning citizens to the General Military Commission and serving them with summons. Employers must ensure the timely arrival of employees involved in the performance of mobilisation duties to assembly points and military units.

Ukrainian businesses fear that the new law could paralyse the economy, as it may lead to the closure of businesses if the military drafts too many workers. Businesses worry about the difficulty of replacing workers with specialised skills, which could lead to the shutdown of operations.

The new law in Ukraine aims to clarify the obligations of businesses regarding the mobilisation of employees for military service. It introduces the concept of 'Critical Enterprise' status, which allows companies with a large number of employees of military age to protect them from mobilisation. This status can be obtained by applying to the relevant authorities, and the criteria for granting it may change over time. The law also extends protection to the beneficial owners of these businesses. This is important because Ukraine needs to balance its military needs with the need to keep its economy running.

The law restricts the driving of vehicles for individuals who do not comply with the mobilisation rules, which may indirectly affect companies with their fleet of vehicles. This restriction may disrupt logistics chains and have negative consequences for business.

Concerns

The law's criticism on not addressing the topic of demobilisation has sparked controversy and criticism both within Ukraine and internationally. It has also been criticised for not setting a time limit for wartime military service, leaving soldiers who have been fighting since the beginning of the full-scale invasion without a clear demobilisation timeline.^[6] This has sparked concerns among families of servicemen, who demand the inclusion of mobilisation deadlines.

Other concerns include the potential for corruption, as local authorities may have too much discretion in their decision-making. There are also questions about the fairness of the

demobilisation process, with some arguing that a day on the frontline should count as two or three days in the rear.

The new law allows for electronic military draft papers to be sent to potential draftees' personal accounts on the main government portal, making it harder for men to avoid being drafted. Those who fail to respond to the electronic summons will be immediately banned from leaving the country, and penalties for draft dodgers include bans on driving, registering a company, working as a self-employed individual, obtaining credit or loans, selling apartments, buying property, or securing social benefits. This raises concerns about the potential for individuals to be unfairly penalized if they do not receive or respond to the electronic summons, particularly if they do not have access to the government portal or are not tech-savvy. Additionally, the law allows prisoners to join the army and increases fines for draft evasion fivefold, which has raised concerns about the morality and effectiveness of these measures.

Many Ukrainians have fled the country to avoid the draft since Russia's all-out invasion in February 2022, with some risking their lives trying to swim across the Tisa River that separates Ukraine from neighbouring Romania and Hungary.

Methodology

To further boost the mobilisation process, the Ukrainian army plans to open a network of 27 new recruitment centres in major cities across the country. These centres will function as advisory and information hubs, providing guidance to those interested in joining the armed forces and allowing candidates to choose which unit they prefer to serve in.[\[7\]](#)

Benefits and Drawbacks

Benefits.

- The law aims to facilitate the identification of every conscript in the country, making it easier to manage the mobilisation process.
- Streamlined mobilisation process through an online registry for recruits.
- The law provides cash bonuses or financial assistance toward purchasing a house or car for soldiers, which could help attract more volunteers.
- Increased manpower through the lowering of the draft age and the introduction of financial incentives
- Modernised recruitment process through the opening of new recruitment centres.

Drawbacks.

- Failure to address the topic of demobilisation for current servicemen.
- Lack of a clear demobilisation timeline.
- Controversy over the mobilisation of prisoners.
- Uncertainty over the law's effectiveness in addressing manpower shortages. The law's provisions, such as cash bonuses or financial assistance for soldiers, may be difficult for Ukraine to afford.

- The law could lead to the closure of businesses if the military drafts too many workers, disrupting the economy.
- Staff Shortages: Essential municipal services, such as heating and utility repairs, will be affected, with concerns about replacing mobilised staff and meeting demand.

Divisive

Ukraine's recent adoption of a controversial mobilisation law has sparked widespread disagreement and criticism both domestically and internationally. The law has caused divisions among different groups within Ukraine and has led to polarised opinions among stakeholders, contributing to a lack of consensus. Its implementation has caused anxiety among Ukrainian citizens, especially those facing conscription, prompting some to consider leaving the country. Concerns about economic instability, government distrust, and human rights violations have heightened tensions. Furthermore, the law's failure to address the demobilisation of long-serving soldiers has further eroded public confidence in the government and increased the desire to emigrate.

Human rights concerns, particularly surrounding the treatment of refugees and internally displaced persons, have intensified the prevailing sense of unease and desire to flee Ukraine. This heightened anxiety stems from uncertainties about the safety and well-being of vulnerable populations amidst the ongoing conflict. Additionally, the lack of adequate support and protection for these individuals exacerbates their vulnerability and adds to the urgency of finding refuge elsewhere.

While the new mobilisation law offers incentives to potential recruits, such as cash bonuses and assistance for housing or transportation, its affordability has been called into question by some analysts. The financial strain of implementing these measures raises concerns about the sustainability of such initiatives and their long-term impact on Ukraine's economy. Moreover, the controversial provisions allowing prisoners to join the army and imposing higher fines for draft dodgers have further polarised opinions and contributed to the contentious nature of the law.

Against the backdrop of a renewed Russian offensive, Ukraine's military is under increased pressure, prompting a lowering of the initial mobilisation target from 5,00,000 to a lower number. The revised mobilization target in Ukraine is due to the immense pressure on the country's military amidst a renewed Russian offensive. This adjustment reflects practical considerations and the challenges faced in mobilising such a large number of individuals amidst ongoing hostilities. The decision to lower the conscription age aims to replenish depleted ranks but raises concerns about the readiness and effectiveness of younger recruits.

However, the mobilisation process faces numerous challenges, including concerns about its impact on the economy, the need for enhanced training and equipment, and inadequate communication from the government regarding its necessity. These challenges are compounded by issues such as troop fatigue, the necessity for improved training systems, and the lack of clear demobilisation or rotation procedures for soldiers with prolonged frontline deployments. Addressing these complexities requires comprehensive planning and coordination to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of Ukraine's military efforts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Ukraine's new mobilisation law is a step towards strengthening the military amidst Russian aggression. While it has its advantages, such as streamlining the mobilisation process and increasing manpower, it also has its disadvantages, including the failure to address demobilisation and the controversy over prisoner mobilisation. The law's effectiveness in addressing manpower shortages and countering Russia's military strength remains uncertain, and its implementation comes as Ukraine faces significant challenges on the battlefield.

[1] Elena Davlikanova, Kateryna Odarchenko , Ukraine’s new mobilization law leaves demobilization issue unresolved, Atlantic Council, 2/05/2024, Date accessed on- 24/05/2024

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/ukraines-new-mobilization-law-leaves-demobilization-issue-unresolved/>

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Zelenskyy pleads for more support amid one of Russia’s largest offensives of the war, 15/05/2024, accessed on- 24/05/2024

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/zelenskyy-pleads-for-more-support-amid-one-of-russias-largest-offensives-of-the-war>

[7] Elena Davlikanova, Kateryna Odarchenko, opcit.

Maj Gen Sanjeev Chowdhry (Retd) is a veteran with over 37 years of commissioned service. A graduate of the DSSC Wellington, and College of Defence Management during his career, the General officer has served in all types of terrain and environment while on command, staff, and instructional duties. He specialises in the subject of Net Assessment and is presently the Director Editorial at the USI.

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