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NATIONAL STABILITY AND THE RESILIENCE OF THE FRONT LINE IN THE EAST OF UKRAINE: ZAPORIZHZHIA, DNIPRO, KHARKIV, AND SUMY

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Abstract*. The full-scale russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, caused significant damage to the country, thus raising the issues of national stability and resilience. Given that Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro, Kharkiv, and Sumy form the front line in the east of Ukraine, this article focuses on analyzing the stability of the specified regions and the resilience of their energy, social, ecological, and economic elements. Due to rocket shelling and air strikes, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro, Kharkiv, and Sumy have suffered human and civil infrastructure losses amounting to billions of dollars. Armed hostilities have also affected the environmental sector. In this regard, ensuring stability and resilience should be oriented toward properly developed mechanisms for both the long and short term. Theoretical research methods and secondary data analysis are used in this article.*

Keywords*: national stability; national resilience; regional safety; front line.*
Reikšminiai* žodžiai*: *nacionalinis stabilumas; nacionalinis atsparumas; regiono saugumas; fronto linija.*

Introduction

Resilience and stability became crucial components of Ukraine's national strength after the full-scale russian invasion on February 24, 2022. Although national resilience is not given extensive attention in scholarly literature, ensuring national stability and resilience is inextricably linked with satisfying national interests, implementing strategic national priorities, and preserving the state's image in the international arena. In this regard, this article aims to explore the stability and resilience of energy, social, ecological, and economic elements in the regions of Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro, Kharkiv, and Sumy – those which form the front line in the east of Ukraine. In this article, the authors use theoretical research methods and secondary data analysis, focusing on the theoretical foundations of national stability and resilience alongside other elements of these phenomena. The major concerns of the front line in the east – specifically energy, social, ecological, and economic elements in Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro, Kharkiv, and Sumy – are also discussed, alongside an exploration of the region's safety.

Understanding national stability and resilience

Issues of the stability of the global system are studied in the works of Deutsch and Singer (1964, 391), who believed that stability should be understood as the system's potential to preserve its basic characteristics. Explaining their position, these authors emphasized that stability might be assessed from the standpoint of the likelihood of a state maintaining its own existence and territorial integrity in the absence of military conflicts. The broadest definition of stability was proposed by American researchers, in particular in the works of Waltz (1964, 882), who defined stability as a state in which the system exists without sudden transformations or destruction. However, such an interpretation of stability does not make it possible to distinguish this concept from the category of stagnation since, in this state; the system simply exists without changes, thereby falling into a state of stagnation and subsequent crisis.

In the authors' opinion, national stability is a structural prerequisite for developing the institutional structure of public administration, modernizing it, and transitioning it to a new level based on national interests and influence. The main aspect of stability is the presence of a certain potential barrier, the overcoming of which, as a result of external disturbances, would mean the transition of the military-strategic supersystem of states into a new qualitative form – from interactions characteristic of peacetime to interactions determined by a fundamentally different logic, leading to war with the use of weapons. At the same time, national stability correlates with national resilience.

Goodwin et al. (2023) considered national resilience over social cohesion, and observed links between the government, community, and aspects that reveal perceived feelings

of self-efficiency and psychological despair. According to the National Research Council (2012, 17), national resilience is explained as a state's capability to recover its initial condition rapidly and preserve its system and operation after unexpected tragedies. National resilience has thus evolved into a model to represent the crisis resistance of a nation, whereas resilience always concerns a sense of values and meaning. In the case of Ukraine, Ukrainian society became not the object of state policy to increase resilience, but the subject of resilience itself. This, not for the first time in our history, supported both the state and institutions, and ultimately enhanced our cohesiveness as a nation.

The issue of resilience is not only based on moral principles, but also presupposes a certain socio-psychological context, which is usually understood as a person's ability to overcome strong opposition, withstand heavy loads and stress, and preserve their inner spiritual world, life principles, and progressive development (Li et al. 2023). At the same time, national stability combines energy, social, ecological, and economic elements which ensure the safety of the state and region.

Understanding the energy component of stability as a dynamic category allows one to formulate the fundamental principles of organizing an energy security management system that would be more consistent with a dynamic and rapidly changing environment, and that would enable the creation of an adequate level of energy security in the long term. A country's energy stability should be closely linked to ecological stability and reducing the negative impact of energy on the environment. Social stability implies the provision to the population of favorable conditions for existence and development in the conditions of internal and external economic transformations. A direct indicator of social stability can be observed in the level, dynamics, and structure of the real incomes of the population (Gupta et al. 2011, 11). Economic stability is a state of the economy in which stable economic growth is maintained, the population's needs are met, management is as efficient as possible, and economic interests are protected at the national and international levels (O'Sullivan 2020). Ecological stability represents the ability of an ecosystem to maintain its principles of organization, structure, and functions when exposed to external and internal factors (Vanschoonbeek 2020). Under war conditions, Ukraine's regions in the east, specifically on the front line (Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro, Kharkiv, and Sumy), are experiencing substantial instability in all of the abovementioned elements.

The front line in the east: major concerns

Zaporizhzhia: energy, social, ecological, and economic elements

According to the Headquarters of the National Police in the Zaporizhzhia Region (2023), a year after russia's full-scale invasion, the regional center alone had suffered over 400 missile strikes. As a result of enemy rocket attacks in the region, 344 individuals were

killed, including 21 children, and 939 people were injured, including 63 children. According to the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (2023a), during the 547 days of the full-scale russian-Ukrainian war, a total of 1,078 episodes related to human losses or the violation of rights among the civilian population were recorded in the Zaporizhzhia region. At least 13,211 civil infrastructure objects had been destroyed/damaged, mainly as a result of missile strikes. Zaporizhzhia continues to suffer from attacks almost every day.

According to the Institute of World History of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (2022), on March 14, 2022, in the territory of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (the largest in Europe), russian army soldiers detonated used ammunition that had not exploded during the storming of the station on March 4, 2022, near the first power unit. As a result, a fire broke out in the administrative building of the power plant. The Institute of the Kyiv School of Economics (2023) notes that since the war began, Ukraine has faced substantial adverse effects from the hostilities, causing direct demolition and economic damage, impacting the state of the surroundings, and leading to considerable emissions of contaminants into the air. The results of these emissions have been disastrous, as they have caused losses that already amount to nearly $4.2 billion, with 7% related to the Zaporizhzhia region. The amount of losses from soil disturbance alone varies between $1–2 billion in the region.

The lack of established work on communication with the population, the negative consequences of hostilities, and the proximity of the front line (with air raid sirens and the shelling of the city every day) complicate the provision of social security in Zaporizhzhia. However, local businesses continue to work even in war conditions, and the gradual recovery of business activity has been recorded in the current year. Among the positive factors contributing to development is the relaxation of restrictions on the work of enterprises, in particular the reduction of the duration of the curfew, the stabilization of the functioning of the energy system, and the remedying of hourly power outages. As a result, according to the data from the first half of 2023, small and medium-sized business entities contributed $93 million to state budgets of all levels. The number of economically active entities increased by 497 units, and the number of employees increased to 114,700 people (Zaporizhzhia Regional State Administration 2023).

Dnipro: energy, social, ecological, and economic elements

According to the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (2023c), the Dnipro region experienced 1,329 episodes from February 2022 to February 2023 that were documented and entered into the database. During the specified period in the Dnipro region, 202 episodes related to human losses or violations of rights among the civilian population were reported. Because of shelling and fighting, at least 176 people were killed, at least 535 people were injured, and at least 6,493 objects of civil infrastructure were damaged.

The Dnipro region accounts for 5% of the $4.2 billion of damage caused by the war-related emission of environmental pollutants (Kyiv School of Economics Institute 2023). The amount of losses from soil disturbance in the region varies between $500 million and $1 billion. According to the Ministry of Energy of Ukraine (2023), the head of the Dnipro Regional Military Administration, Serhiy Lysak, emphasized that a working group operates in the region. This group has inspected all energy facilities and identified priority areas where the strategic level of protection needs to be increased. Lysak also provided assurances that the region's leadership is placing maximum emphasis on protecting critical infrastructure and shielding consumers from the consequences of possible enemy attacks on energy facilities.

According to Visit Ukraine (2023), the largest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine fled to Dnipro. From February 24, 2022, to May 31, 2023, 150,000 displaced people moved to the city, and since 2014 the total number of IDPs who have fled to Dnipro is as high as 187,000. Dnipro works to sustain its economic activity, and businesses have begun to adapt to the challenging conditions. For instance, while over 40% of eating locations were closed by the end of March 2022, now 80% of cafes and restaurants have resumed their work.

Kharkiv: energy, social, ecological, and economic elements

The full-scale aggression of russia against Ukraine negatively affected the economic and social development of the city of Kharkiv. According to Dolzhko from The Information Portal of the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (2023), as of February 23, 2023, over 9,250 incidents had been documented in the area. Almost 6,400 individuals had fallen victim to the war crimes of the russian occupiers, with over 1,600 civilian deaths, including almost 100 children. According to the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (2022), at least 4,240 objects of civil infrastructure had been ruined after the first 6 months of the war.

According to data from the official website of the Kharkiv City Council Mayor Executive Committee (2023), because of hostilities, numerous industrial enterprises located in the city have suffered significant damage. According to the data of the Main Directorate of the State Tax Service (STS) in the Kharkiv region, as of April 1, 2023, the number of individual entrepreneurs in the city of Kharkiv was 119,000 (as of January 1, 2023, this figure was 119,700). During January–March 2023, 3,100 individual entrepreneurs ceased their activities, and 276 individual entrepreneurs moved their businesses from Kharkiv and changed their legal addresses. During Q1 2023, more than 2,400 individual entrepreneurs officially registered businesses in Kharkiv. The consequences of military aggression and martial law have significantly affected the volume of retail trade in Kharkiv. However, due to the increase in the number of special offers provided by retail chains and small businesses, active recovery, and an increase in the number of retail chains, there is an increase in turnover.

Trade businesses, restaurants, markets, trading platforms, household services, and gas stations continue to resume their work, some partially, some completely. Retail chains in Kharkiv are also resuming their work and continuing to develop, and the total number of enterprises in this area is now as high as 312. There are 12 hypermarkets, 183 supermarkets, and 35 shopping centers in the city, offering a wide range of goods, household appliances, building materials and services, and providing computerized payment systems for customers. Despite the constant shelling of Kharkiv, industrial enterprises in the city continue their production activities and fulfill orders to ensure that the vital needs of the country and the population are met. Because of the full-scale military aggression of the russian federation, some industrial enterprises from Kharkiv moved to other communities and regions, where they continue to work to provide for the population's basic needs.

The Kharkiv region accounts for 12% of the $4.2 billion of war-related environmental damage (Kyiv School of Economics Institute 2023), the entire losses of war emissions have already attained around 12% of $4.2 billion related to the Kharkiv region. The amount of losses from soil disturbance in the region varies between $1–2 billion.

Sumy: energy, social, ecological, and economic elements

According to the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (2023b), in the first 425 days (from February 24, 2022, to April 24, 2023) of the full-scale russian-Ukrainian war in the Sumy region, 1,282 episodes were recorded. At least 184 individuals were killed, and a minimum of 370 people were injured, mainly due to rocket attacks and explosive devices. During the specified period, at least 1,947 objects of civil infrastructure were destroyed, mainly by missile strikes.

According to the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (2023d), the State Environmental Inspection in the Sumy region recorded 53 cases of impact on environmental components, and carried out damage calculations amounting to a total of $57.4 million. The organization also calculated the following losses resulting from the russian federation's armed invasion and subsequent hostilities (the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, 2023d):

- the clogging of land plots with construction and other waste caused by russian troops' shelling – 5 cases, total amount $1.4 million;
- atmospheric air pollution – 27 cases, total amount $5.6 million;
- the clogging of surface water caused by the undermining of a bridge – 13 cases, total amount $50 million;
- damage to trees to the extent of stopping growth and harming forests due to rocket fire – 7 cases, total amount $150 million;
- losses resulting from the armed invasion and strikes in the areas of the nature reserve fund – 1 case, total amount $167.7 million.

According to the Sumy Regional Military Administration (2023), regarding the general picture of the energy complex of the Sumy region, the most significant damage to the energy infrastructure was caused by airstrikes in March 2022. However, attacks on the energy system continued throughout 2022–2023. Currently, the electrical networks that are located near the border remain damaged.

According to the information of the Department of Economic Development and Trade of the Sumy Region (Khanin 2023), by the end of the winter of 2023, almost 90% of the enterprises of the Sumy region were working at a total capacity of 30–70%. As of the end of December 2022, only 56% of the main enterprises of the region had fully resumed work, 33% had done so partially, and 11% had not resumed work. Given this, the fact that 72 IDPs were employed in January–April 2023 can be called a positive dynamic in the displaced persons labor market, as this is 12 times more than in the same period of the previous year.

Ensuring the region's safety

The authors consider that a mechanism for ensuring stability is a system of means, methods, and instruments with the help of which a specific action is carried out on threatened socio-political, economic, ecological, energy-based, or social processes to protect the vital interests of society and the state. Such methods, in addition to specialized organizations that implement the function of ensuring stability, include the regulatory framework that underlies the formation and functioning of the relevant organizations and their interaction in achieving the goal of ensuring stability. This interaction consists of a set of methods, techniques, and tools.

The ability of this mechanism to ensure stability contributes to: preserving the unity of the civil population and national-cultural values; enhancing stability in social and economic relations; and forecasting political and social crises. If the latter arise, the ability to overcome them is one criterion by which the effectiveness of this system can be judged. In practice, the implementation of the state's social policy reflects the stability of society, which means that mechanisms for ensuring stability should reflect the following main directions of the state's social policy (Aravacik 2018; Borg 2018, 7–8):

- demography (fertility and mortality rates, average life expectancy, migration, number of families, etc.);
- social and labor conditions (labor resources, dynamics of employment and unemployment indicators, working conditions, etc.);
- level and quality of life of the population (indicators of real cash income, dynamics of consumption of goods, availability of cash savings, level of social benefits, etc.);
- housing security of the population (availability of housing stock in terms of square footage, amenities, needs for improvement);

- healthcare (indicators of population morbidity, causes of mortality, disability, characteristics of medical infrastructure, quality of staffing);
- socio-psychological state of the population (social satisfaction, anxiety, disadvantage, conflict, strikes).

At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, large objects of entrepreneurial activity and commercial production were in russian sights, most likely due to the objective of freezing the region's economy. Later, transport routes (bridges and roads) were damaged to slow down the military logistics of the Ukrainian Armed Forces after the enemy destroyed places of possible deployment and other ecological objects. The priority of the enemy was to damage objects of strategic importance, which is the reason for placing the issue of strengthening the protection of undamaged objects that fit this category at the fore.

Despite losses and damages in the east and in the front-line cities of Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro, Kharkiv, and Sumy, safe functioning requires the government to arrange its forces and follow the course of recovery. This will involve reintegration policies based on the concept of safe reintegration with a focus on building stability, enhancing social cohesion at the level of communities and regions, and overcoming the consequences of occupation. Tools for achieving these goals include inclusive dialogue, transitional justice and rule of law approaches, the restoration of justice, and relevant reforms.

The recovery of the environmental sector after the war is likely to be more difficult than that of other industries. Much more money will need to be spent than is currently foreseen in the numerous damage reports. Therefore, mechanisms for ensuring stability and resilience should be oriented toward both the long and short term. Strategic mechanisms require more careful preparation, as their specificity lies in their focus on the young population. This means that if they are applied in a timely manner, they will be able to ensure stability in the long term since future social problems will simply not arise.

Conclusion

1. Stability and resilience are always specific, and public authorities are therefore obliged to determine their degree and take subsequent actions to neutralize particular threats on an ongoing basis. This must take into account the entire set of conditions and factors of the political, economic, social, and environmental processes that can cause damage to the country's national interests. The subjects of the integrated stability system include a set of government bodies, local governments, management structures of enterprises, institutions, organizations and public associations, citizens, and specially created management bodies. These entities carry out purposeful activities and direct participation in the implementation of the goals and objectives of ensuring the region's stability.

2. The system for ensuring the stability of the front-line region of Ukraine in the east should be based on the strategic management of elements of the regional security and stability system. The executive authorities of this area must cement the planned values that characterize indicators of each element of the region's stability, namely social, economic, energy-based, and environmental. Achieving this task will contribute to the socio-economic development of the area and ensure its transition towards a new targeted state of resilience. Moreover, mechanisms for sustainable development based on an efficient military waste management process will allow Ukraine to move towards greening the economy, thus increasing the wellbeing of the post-war population. From the perspective of the stable development of the region, it is important to identify and develop a system of indicators based on strategic planning documents. These indicators must manage the transition of the region from a damaging, technogenic place towards an integrated, environmentally oriented path of development.

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NACIONALINIS STABILUMAS IR ATSPARUMAS PRIEKINĖJE FRONTO LINIJOJE RYTŲ UKRAINOJE: ZAPORIŽĖS, DNIPRO, CHARKIVO IR SUMŲ SRIČIŲ ATVEJIS

Nuo 2022 m. vasario 24 d. įvykusi plataus masto Rusijos invazija Ukrainai atnešė daug nuostolių ir žalos, todėl iškyla nacionalinio stabilumo ir šalies atsparumo problema. Atsižvelgus į tai, kad Zaporižė, Dnipras, Charkivas ir Sumai sudaro fronto liniją Ukrainos rytuose, straipsnyje buvo nagrinėjamas konkrečių regionų stabilumas ir atsparumas energetiniams, socialiniams, ekologiniams ir ekonominiams elementams. Dėl raketų apšaudymo ir oro antskrydžių Zaporižės, Dnipro, Charkivo ir Sumų sritys patyrė milijardų dolerių žmonių ir civilinės infrastruktūros nuostolių. Ginkluoti karo veiksmai paveikė aplinkosaugos sektorių. Šiuo atžvilgiu stabilumo ir atsparumo užtikrinimas turėtų būti orientuotas į ilgalaikį ir trumpalaikį laikotarpį, naudojant tinkamai parengtus mechanizmus. Šiam tyrimui atlikti buvo taikomi teoriniai tyrimo metodai ir antrinė duomenų analizė.

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