











REVIEW

The Impact of Political Risks on the Effectiveness of Public Policy

El impacto de los riesgos políticos en la eficacia de las políticas públicas en Ucrania

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ABSTRACT

Public policy is one of the areas for regulating socio-economic, cultural, and environmental challenges that affect citizens' quality of life. The article aims to study the impact of political risks on the effectiveness of public policy in Ukraine. To achieve this goal, the authors examine the state of research on the problems of modern public policy and the political risks Ukraine faces. OpenAlex, Scopus, and Google Scholar databases were used to collect literature. 5756 results were obtained by keywords. After removing 1876 duplicates, screening, and thematic analysis, another 2805 sources were rejected. 1075 remained, which were evaluated according to the following criteria: topic, connection with the Ukrainian context, presence of challenges, language (English), date (from 2016), and methodology. As a result, 54 sources were included in the analysis. The VosViewer software was used to process the literature available in the OpenAlex database for the systematic literature analysis. The results emphasise that systemic corruption in public authorities is a significant risk. The high expropriation risk, which primarily concerns sanctioned assets, is also noted. High political violence risks were also reported, indicating instability that could escalate into internal conflicts or other political confrontations. Security risks are relatively moderate and inferior to public risks associated with economic processes. The conclusions summarise that the studied indicators demonstrate a high level of political and financial risks, which generally harm the conduct of public policy in Ukraine. An exceptionally high level of political violence and default threat may lead to governmental instability and problems implementing long-term political strategies.

Keywords: Economic Security; Geopolitical Instability; Management Decisions; Public Administration, Strategic Planning.

RESUMEN

Las políticas públicas son una de las áreas que regulan los desafíos socioeconómicos, culturales y ambientales que afectan la calidad de vida de los ciudadanos. El artículo busca estudiar el impacto de los riesgos políticos en la eficacia de las políticas públicas en Ucrania. Para lograr este objetivo, el autor examina el estado de la investigación sobre los problemas de las políticas públicas modernas y los riesgos políticos que enfrenta

Ucrania. Se utilizaron las bases de datos OpenAlex, Scopus y Google Scholar para recopilar bibliografía. Se obtuvieron 5756 resultados mediante palabras clave. Tras eliminar 1876 duplicados, realizar una selección y un análisis temático, se rechazaron otras 2805 fuentes. Quedaron 1075, que se evaluaron según los siguientes criterios: tema, conexión con el contexto ucraniano, presencia de retos, idioma (inglés), fecha (a partir de 2016) y metodología. Como resultado, se incluyeron 54 fuentes en el análisis. Se utilizó el software VosViewer para procesar la bibliografía disponible en la base de datos OpenAlex para el análisis bibliográfico sistemático. Los resultados destacan que la corrupción sistémica en las autoridades públicas constituye un riesgo significativo. También se observa un alto riesgo de expropiación, que afecta principalmente a activos sancionados. Se reportaron altos riesgos de violencia política, lo que indica inestabilidad que podría derivar en conflictos internos u otras confrontaciones políticas. Los riesgos de seguridad son relativamente moderados e inferiores a los riesgos públicos asociados a los procesos económicos. Las conclusiones resumen que los indicadores estudiados demuestran un alto nivel de riesgos políticos y financieros, que generalmente perjudican la ejecución de las políticas públicas en Ucrania. Un nivel excepcionalmente alto de violencia política y amenaza de impago puede generar inestabilidad gubernamental y problemas para implementar estrategias políticas a largo plazo.

Palabras clave: Seguridad Económica; Inestabilidad Geopolítica; Decisiones de Gestión; Administración Pública; Planificación Estratégica.

INTRODUCTION

Forming an effective public policy in modern conditions is essential to sustainable state development. Public policy is aimed at solving urgent socio-economic, cultural, and environmental problems that directly affect the standard of living of citizens, the welfare of society, and social development. However, such effectiveness depends heavily on the level of stability of the political environment since politicians are responsible for its successful implementation.^(1,2) Political challenges for transition economies, including Ukraine, have been significant obstacles to realising specific goals.⁽³⁾ The Russian aggression only deepened the existing difficulties. It demonstrated the importance of political culture in the interaction between political elites and society and the work of political elites in the international arena in the difficult time of military invasion.

At the present stage, political risks are understood as a wide range of phenomena, including transformations in government structures, manifestations of political instability, individual corruption scandals, work on external geopolitical threats, conflicts between separate government branches, and legislative framework changes. In the Ukrainian context, such risks have become essential to political life and tangible factors that negatively impact the country's ability to respond effectively to internal and external challenges. In addition, transformations in government teams, unpredictability in creating a legislative framework, Russian military aggression, and related risks significantly weaken the ability to act in a planned manner and implement long-term plans for public initiatives. The issue of effective policy in Ukraine has repeatedly attracted the attention of researchers. It has been noted that a significant level of political instability in Ukraine leads to a reduction or even blocking of the implementation of necessary political reforms, a decrease in public confidence in the work of state institutions, an increase in the risk of corruption, and other internal problems.^(4,5,6) Against the backdrop of the Russian aggression, this situation can lead not only to difficulties with the decision-making process but also to an impact on the ability of public authorities to control the situation and respond objectively to existing challenges. Undoubtedly, such a situation is rightly associated with risks, the investment climate, and the formation of the country's overall position in the future recovery process.^(7,8,9) Much research attention has been paid to the problems of integrating modern digital technologies into public policy and establishing cooperation with society.^(10,11) At the same time, the importance of artificial intelligence, digital platforms for the development of civil society, specific tools in interaction with the media, etc., are also discussed.^(12,13,14) Such issues are no less relevant in times of martial law, when interaction and communication should be at a high level, as they affect prompt decision-making.

Researchers also reflect on the peculiarities of the further evolution of public policy, taking into account globalization and economic and social challenges.^(15,16,17) Given that in Ukraine, old challenges have been combined and actualized by the Russian invasion, further analysis of trends in the formation of political culture in Ukraine in general will require broader research. However, the impact of political risks in the analyzed scientific works was on the margins of research attention. In addition, public policy during wartime is considered inappropriate, as it prefers secret diplomacy and covert interaction with society.^(18,19) This view has been objectively criticized,⁽²⁰⁾ as public actions inspire confidence in times of crisis. However, the problem of political challenges in the field of public policy remains an urgent research issue.

The article aims to analyse the impact of political risks on the effectiveness of public policy in Ukraine. The

realization of this goal involves finding answers to specific research questions:

1. What is the state of research on public policymaking in the context of Russian military aggression?
2. What are the political risks faced by Ukraine?

METHOD

Research design

This study is mixed-methods research, as it combines the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The PRISMA approach was used to collect the literature, which involved the search for relevant scientific sources.

Sample and data collection

The sample was formed from various sources, including scientific literature, analytical reports, and political risk indices. Accordingly, the main sources of data on political risks were analytical reports and political risk indices (Political Risk Index, Corruption Perception Index).

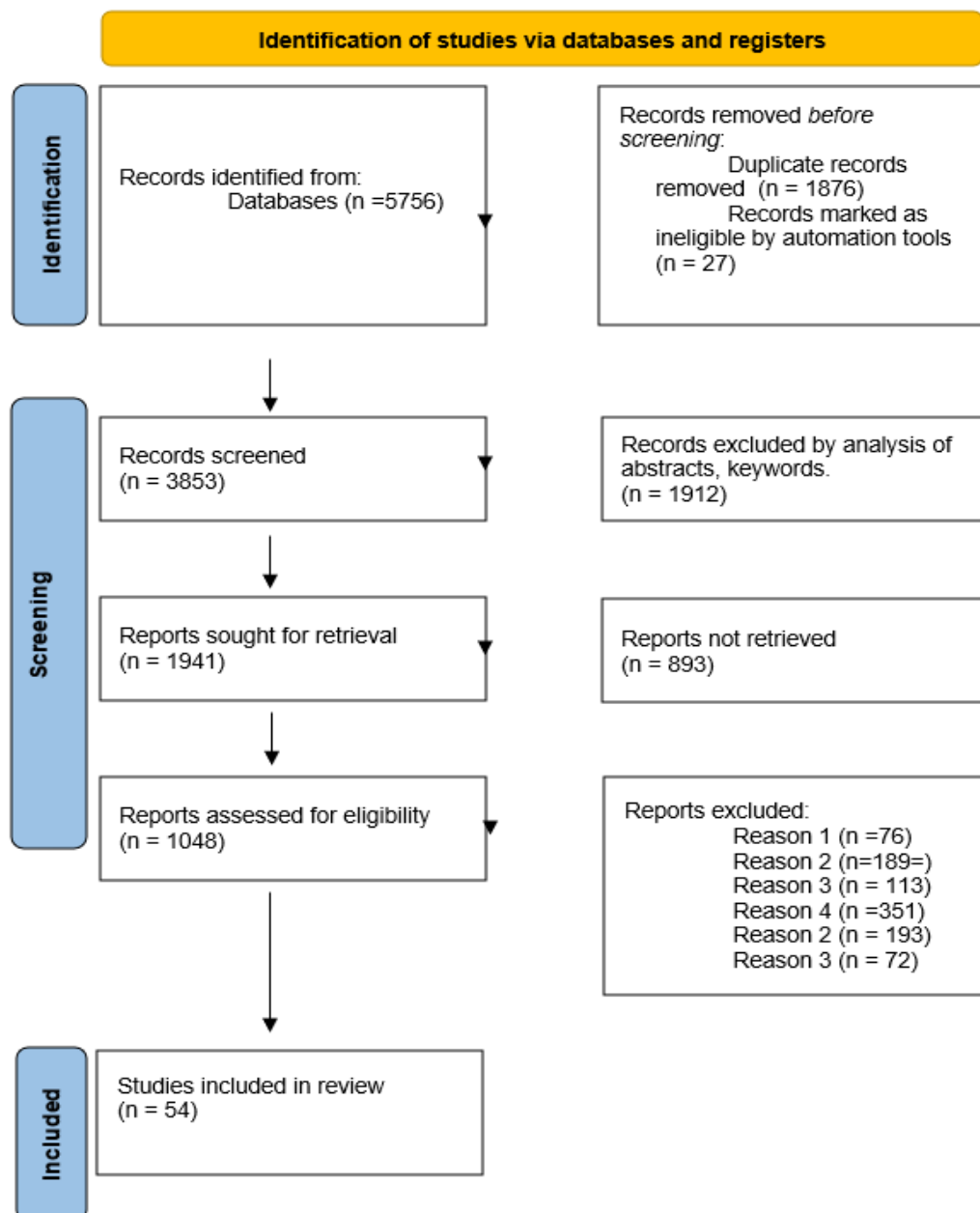


Figure 1. Identification of materials according to PRISMA

Each source was subjected to the inclusion criteria: 1. The work deals with the peculiarities of the functioning of public policy. 2. The work describes the Ukrainian realities of public policy (189 sources were removed). 3. The study characterizes the main challenges that affect the effectiveness of public policy implementation.

4. The language of writing is English. 5. Date range: from 2016. 7. The study contains data on methodology and data collection (100 sources were removed). The strict criteria were 4 and 5. All the other criteria were adapted based on the text itself; in particular, the literature includes studies that relate not only to the realities of Ukraine but also to Europe and other countries.

The next stage of data collection involved the selection of scientific literature. For this purpose, 2 search databases were selected: Open Alex and Scopus. The relevant keywords, including public policy, Ukraine, Europe, politics, risks, and efficiency, were entered into these databases. A total of 3412 results were obtained. After that, the selected scientific databases were expanded and Google Scholar was added, which presents papers from various peer-reviewed journals. According to the general list, another 2344 results were added. The inclusion of literature involved the stages of duplicate rejection, screening, analysis, and selection. In particular, all duplicates—1876 papers—were initially eliminated. At the screening stage, the source was checked for relevance and topicality. At the same stage, we analyzed the topic, abstract, and keywords and rejected those papers that were not relevant to the chosen topic—1912 papers. Accordingly, another 893 papers were rejected. At the same stage, we analyzed the topic, abstract, and keywords and rejected those papers that were not relevant to the chosen topic—1912 papers. Accordingly, 1048 results were obtained. Each selected source was then subjected to the inclusion criteria. Figure 1 shows all the stages of literature selection and collection.

Data analysis

Data analysis was carried out step-by-step and systematically. For this purpose, we used software such as Vosviewer and Excel. To analyze the data, the selected sources were transferred to Excel spreadsheets, where all information was structured into components: author, year of writing, basic data, and conclusions.

This helped to process the data and systematize the information contained in the scientific sources. At the same time, the Vosviewer software was used for the systematic analysis of the literature, which processed the literature available in the OpenAlex database.

A systematic analysis of the data obtained from selected analytical reports and indices was also carried out. All the information obtained was transferred to Graphs. The comparative analysis method was used to compare the data obtained with the data available in other scientific literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Public policy is one of the key components in the development of modern society. Its significance and influence are important for all spheres of public life, including economic indicators and social development, the legislative framework, and diplomatic relations.^(21,22) Studies have repeatedly emphasised the importance of research and analysis of public policy. This statement is substantiated by the relevance of social development, in particular in the direction of forming the basic values and principles of functioning of state institutions.

Public policy is a system of decisions, measures, and strategic decisions designed to achieve specific goals in society. It demonstrates the state's ability and willingness to use management mechanisms aimed at ensuring sustainable development and meeting citizens' needs.^(23,24) For public policy, it is important to have a system of goals that covers the issues of economic development, social justice, security, and support for national culture.

First and foremost, public policy sets goals and objectives, develops strategies, and creates mechanisms for their implementation, including specific tools for implementing decisions already made.⁽²⁵⁾

According to another research point of view, public policy is a system of planning and implementation of actions aimed at solving very specific problems in the activities of society. In particular, an important characteristic of public policy is its focus on the common good.^(26,27) Besides, the essence of public policy as an activity aimed at gaining and maintaining power, as well as reconciling the interests of various social circles, makes it a risky area. At the current stage of development, Ukraine's political system is characterized by instability, volatility, and crisis phenomena that affect the general public interest.

Therefore, in order to make certain specific decisions, it is necessary to be aware of possible risks and changes. Studying, analyzing and forecasting public policy and individual political decisions is an important task of scientific research. According to the analysis of the scientometric database, there are 8 clusters that reflect the most used keywords in scientific works on public policy in Ukraine.

The largest clusters correspond to the areas of research: political science, economics, international relations, and psychology. Smaller terms refer to various phenomena, including national security, cyber war, political economy, diplomacy, aggression, ideology, solidarity, and others (figure 1).

As figure 1 shows, the study of political risks is not a popular subject in current scholarship, so these clusters show important areas and phenomena related to public policy in Ukraine.

Political risks that affect the effectiveness of public policy in Ukraine should be classified into several categories. The first category concerns political instability. Conflicts between the branches of government can block the process of adopting laws and reduce the effectiveness of public policy.^(28,29)

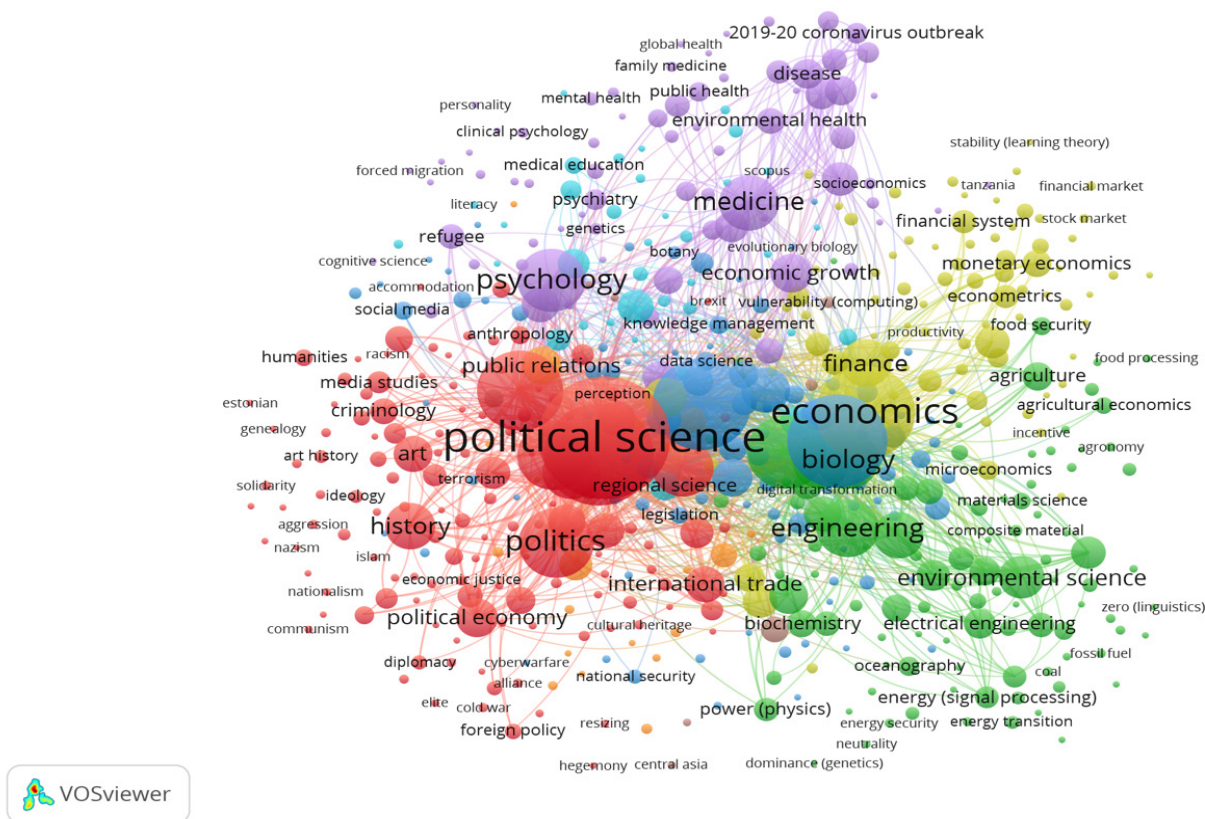
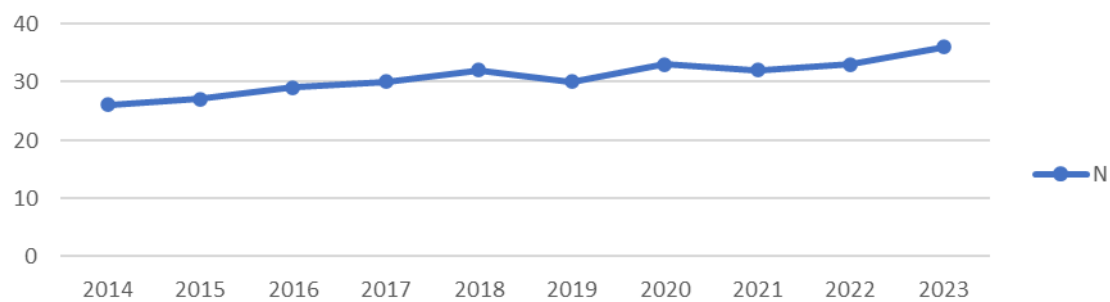


Figure 2. Research clusters of public policy

On the other hand, corruption in public authorities is an important challenge. In particular, systemic corruption undermines trust in public institutions, distorts the implementation of government programs, and thus impedes the efficient use of resources. Ukraine ranks 107th out of 140 countries in the overall list of countries in the Corruption Risk Index. In 2023 Ukraine received 36 points, down 3 points from the previous year (figure 2). That is, despite the rather low level, there is a noticeable increase in the index.



Source: Corruption Perceptions Index <https://cpi.ti-ukraine.org/en/>

Figure 3. Corruption index scores

In addition, corruption can lead to a lack of transparency and accountability in political decision-making and contribute to unequal resource distribution and inadequate policy implementation.⁽³⁰⁾ In highly corrupt countries, public policy is often shaped not by public demand but by private or political interests, which undermines its effectiveness and reduces trust in public institutions. At the same time, low levels of integrity in public administration are also correlated with poor institutional quality, a weak regulatory environment, limited access to justice, and opaque budget processes. All of this complicates the development and implementation of policies focused on sustainable development, social justice, and the rule of law. Table 2 shows the Corruption Perceptions Index for 2023, which presents selected European countries to illustrate the gap between Western Europe and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Ukraine ranks 104th with an overall score of 36, indicating that systemic corruption remains a key barrier to effective public policy implementation.

For comparison, Western European countries – such as Denmark (90 points), Finland (87), Switzerland (82), and Germany (78) – demonstrate significantly better results, which indicates the presence of more stable democratic institutions, a higher level of trust in government, and, accordingly, a higher quality of public policy formation and implementation (table 1).






Country / Territory	Region	CPI score 2023	Rank	Number of sources
Denmark	WE/EU	90	1	8
Finland	WE/EU	87	2	8
New Zealand	AP	85	3	8
Switzerland	WE/EU	82	6	7
Germany	WE/EU	78	9	8
Ireland	WE/EU	77	11	8
Austria	WE/EU	71	20	8
France	WE/EU	71	20	8
Lithuania	WE/EU	61	34	10
Portugal	WE/EU	61	34	8
Latvia	WE/EU	60	36	9
Spain	WE/EU	60	36	8
Croatia	WE/EU	50	57	9
Greece	WE/EU	49	59	8
Montenegro	ECA	46	63	5
Romania	WE/EU	46	63	10
Hungary	WE/EU	42	76	10
Ukraine	ECA	36	104	8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	ECA	35	108	6

Source: Based on Corruption Perceptions Index <https://cpi.ti-ukraine.org/en/>

According to the Political Risk Index, the risk of expropriation in Ukraine is medium-high (83). However, it generally refers to the nationalisation of assets belonging to Russia. The sovereign default risk is exceptionally high (92). This risk is gradually increasing due to Ukraine's sovereign debt obligations, which must be fulfilled by 2024. However, although the situation is not easy, the Ukrainian government is trying to keep the agreement on the restructuring of Eurobonds by the holders alive. However, economic crises or budget deficits affect the implementation of effective public policies due to insufficient funding. In addition, the state's growth limits the government's ability to invest in social programs and various innovative infrastructure projects.

Political violence has a highly high-risk score of 90.

Martial law was imposed immediately after the Russian invasion and extended every three months, banning mass gatherings and rallies. Furthermore, during a conflict, there is an arbitrary unity within the domestic state; however, specific state programs and actions may increasingly challenge this unity.⁽³¹⁾ It seems unlikely that violent public protests can be provoked in the current atmosphere.

Indicator	2021	2022	2023	2024	Trend
Expropriation Risk	65	68	68	83	
Political Violence Risk	85	90	90	90	
Terrorism Risk	24	24	24	24	
Exchange Transfer	73	64	64	45	
Sovereign Default Risk	74	92	92	92	

Source: based on Wilkin.⁽³¹⁾
Note: the Trend column uses colored triangles: red – worsening situation (increasing risk), yellow – no change, green – improving situation (decreasing risk)

Thus, based on the Political Risk Index (table 2), current risks affect the functioning of Public policy. A high level of expropriation risk (83) indicates possible threats to investors and businesses from asset seizures or nationalisation without adequate compensation. This may negatively affect investment policy. A very high risk of political violence (90) indicates instability, which may reflect internal conflicts or other forms of political violence. This poses a significant threat to state stability and public policy. A low risk of terrorism (24) indicates a relatively stable security situation. Despite the war, the immediate threat of terrorist attacks is assessed as low. Medium risk of currency transactions (45) indicates possible difficulties with transferring currency abroad, which may result from economic policies or regulations. The high risk of sovereign default (92) indicates a significant threat to the economy, as Ukraine may be unable to fulfil its obligations on external or internal debt.

Forming effective public policy at the present stage is an essential element of sustainable state development. This study aimed to analyse the impact of political risks on the effectiveness of public policy in Ukraine. To achieve this goal, the author studied the state of research on the issues of public policy-making in the context of Russian military aggression and identified and characterized the political risks Ukraine faces at the present stage.

The proposed results emphasise that public policy is one of the integral parts of the development of modern society. Its significance and influence are essential for all spheres of public life, including economic indicators and the development of the social sphere, the legislative framework and diplomatic relations. Public policy is a system of decisions, measures, and strategic decisions designed to achieve societal goals. We are talking about public policy, for which goals for economic development, social justice, security, and support of national culture are essential. This emphasises the views of researchers that even in times of political crisis and instability, public policy forms goals and objectives and develops strategies and mechanisms for their implementation.^(32,33) The researcher's view that the essence of public policy is aimed at gaining and maintaining power is also objective.^(34,35,36) The results show that Russian aggression has brought instability to Ukraine's political system. This correlates with other studies in which scholars have come to the same conclusions.^(37,38) At the same time, an analysis of the scientometric database is proposed, which shows the existence of 8 clusters that reflect the most used keywords in scientific works on public policy in Ukraine: political science, economics, international relations, and psychology. Less attention is paid to national security, cyber warfare, political economy, diplomacy, aggression, ideology, solidarity, etc.^(39,40) The findings confirm the conclusions of other scholars who have noted the connection between public policy and political science and economics, and to a lesser extent with aggression, diplomacy, and solidarity.^(41,42,43) This indicates a general tendency to understand public policy as a political science issue that has received other threats, including political risks, due to Russian aggression.⁽⁴⁴⁾ It is also worth considering the foreign policy context of public policy formation in Ukraine. The growing influence of the Global South on international relations intensifies competition for support for its countries between the Global North, primarily the United States and the European Union, and the Global East, in particular Russia and China.⁽⁴⁵⁾ In this context, Ukraine finds itself in the focus of a geopolitical struggle for spheres of influence, which further exacerbates political risks and complicates the stability of public policy, especially in times of war.⁽⁴⁶⁾ The proposed results indicate that one category of political risks relates to political instability: conflicts between the branches of government and corruption in public authorities, which can lead to a lack of transparency and accountability in political decision-making. This internal instability is further intensified by the external geopolitical tensions, as global actors compete for influence in strategically important regions. At the same time, it is in the world community's common interest that the Global South acts as one of the independent balancing pillars of the world order, in cooperation and competition with the Global West and Global East.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Such a multipolar configuration could mitigate the dominance of particular blocs and contribute to a more stable and inclusive international environment, within which countries like Ukraine could better navigate external pressures and enhance their internal governance capacities.^(45,46) Moreover, the results confirms the conclusions of other scholars who have identified systemic corruption as one of the most significant risks to Ukrainian politics in general.^(46,47,48) At the same time, economic and debt risks also hurt public policy, making it difficult to maintain social programs or innovative projects at the proper level.^(48,49,50)

The proposed study also notes political violence: martial law prohibits active political activity, and there is arbitrary unity within the domestic state during a conflict; however, this unity may be increasingly challenged by specific government programs and actions.^(51,52) This confirms the results of other scholars, according to whom public policy has been in a kind of anabiosis since the beginning of the war, but this does not mean that it will continue to be so.^(53,54) At the same time, it has been demonstrated that in Ukraine, without a peak, the situation with terrorism is perceived more calmly. Despite the war, the immediate threat of terrorist attacks is assessed as low. Under such circumstances, most risks to public policy are associated with the economic component, Russian aggression, and factors of political instability within the state.⁽⁵⁵⁾

Limitations

The proposed methodology has certain limitations. First, they relate to the selection of processed scientific sources while considering the main research problem. In particular, the analysis focuses on relevant English-

language literature published primarily in professional peer-reviewed journals. At the same time, this does not preclude the possibility that some relevant opinions were published in publications written in other languages. It is also worth noting that the use of open databases (OpenAlex, Scopus, Google Scholar) and screening criteria may have led to the exclusion of relevant sources that did not meet the technical requirements, despite their analytical value. In addition, the interpretation of indicators such as the CPI or the Political Risk Index depends on the chosen methodology and may contain institutional or regional biases. These facts don't not diminish the importance of the theoretical research conducted but opens up prospects for further elaboration of this issue.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the results of the study indicate that political risks, in particular high levels of corruption, the risk of expropriation, default and political violence, significantly complicate the implementation of effective public policy in Ukraine. The Corruption Perceptions Index demonstrates a low level of trust in state institutions, which negatively affects the implementation of reforms, in particular in sensitive sectors such as healthcare and education, where accountability and transparency are critical.

The high risk of expropriation (83) limits the inflow of investment, which in the long term reduces the possibilities of financing strategic reforms through private-public partnerships. The risk of political violence (90), caused by Russian military aggression, threatens political stability and increases the fragmentation of state policy - especially in areas that require unity of approaches and interdepartmental coordination.

While the level of terrorist threat remains low (24), other forms of political instability pose serious challenges to governance processes and the implementation of long-term strategies. In particular, the risk of default (92) limits the fiscal capacity of the state, which directly affects the financing of social programs and public services. At the same time, the level of political violence and instability limit the opportunities for deep reforms in the health sector, which requires stable institutional coordination, long-term financing and social dialogue. In the education sector, corruption and the risk of default reduce investment in educational infrastructure, affect equity of access to quality education and weaken the transparency of personnel policies. Thus, political risks are not an abstract macro indicator, but have clear and measurable consequences for the functioning of the public administration system. To increase the effectiveness of public policy in a crisis situation, the state must adapt planning approaches, focus on strengthening institutional capacity, and implement flexible and anti-crisis management models.

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