

## Historical analysis of public administration mechanisms for Ukraine's National Security in response to Russian armed aggression (2014-2025)

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### Abstract

From a legal and institutional perspective, in situations of prolonged armed conflict, such as that which has been ongoing in Ukraine since 2014, national security becomes a comprehensive phenomenon that encompasses the entire state apparatus. In this scenario, the objective of the research is to analyze

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historically the public administration mechanisms implemented by the Ukrainian state between 2014 and 2025 to guarantee national security in the face of Russian armed aggression, identifying in the process its institutional transformations, civil defense strategies and intergovernmental coordination processes. To meet this objective, a research methodology was developed based on the selection and traceability of documentary materials, qualitative research, and internal and external criticism of sources. In our conclusions, we argue that historical science must question how this confrontation is transforming essential concepts about national sovereignty, the international order, collective security and the future of liberal democracy in the 21st century, recognizing that Ukraine has become a battlefield, not only in territorial terms, but also in ideological terms, which reveals much about the political future of Europe and the world today.

**Keywords:** public administration; governance; state policy; national security; public policy.

*Análisis histórico de los mecanismos de administración pública para  
la Seguridad Nacional de Ucrania en respuesta a la agresión  
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### Resumen

Desde la perspectiva de la historia jurídico-institucional, es evidente que, en situaciones de conflicto armado prolongado, como lo sucedido en Ucrania desde 2014, la seguridad nacional se transforma en un fenómeno integral que abarca la totalidad del aparato estatal. En este escenario, el objetivo de la investigación consiste en analizar históricamente los mecanismos de la administración pública, implementados por el Estado ucraniano entre 2014 y 2025, para garantizar la seguridad nacional frente a la agresión armada rusa, identificando en el proceso sus transformaciones institucionales, estrategias de defensa civil y procesos de coordinación intergubernamental. Para responder a este objetivo se articuló una metodología de la investigación basada en la selección y trazabilidad de los materiales documentales, la investigación cualitativa y la crítica interna y externa de las fuentes. En las conclusiones, sostenemos que la ciencia histórica debe cuestionar de qué manera este enfrentamiento está transformando conceptos esenciales acerca de la soberanía nacional, el orden internacional, la seguridad

colectiva y el porvenir de la democracia liberal en el siglo XXI, reconociendo que Ucrania se ha convertido en un campo de batalla, no solo en términos territoriales, sino también ideológicos, lo cual revela mucho sobre el futuro político de Europa y del mundo.

**Palabras clave:** administración pública; gobernanza; política estatal; seguridad nacional; política pública.

## Introduction

In general, national security in times of war is a multidimensional public policy that transcends the limits of military defense or territorial control. In contexts of prolonged armed conflict, such as the one experienced by Ukraine since 2014, national security becomes a cross-cutting phenomenon that involves the entire state apparatus. In the words of Nehara et al. (2025), this perspective recognizes that the protection of sovereignty depends not only on the armed forces, but also on the administrative capacity to coordinate institutions, manage resources, guarantee basic services, and sustain the legitimacy of the State before its citizens. Under the logic of this approach, the public administration acquires a strategic role in the articulation of policies that ensure institutional and social stability in the midst of war.

At the same time, national security must be understood as an articulated system of economic, social, technological and diplomatic policies that act together to strengthen the autonomy of the State. In the Ukrainian case, the war has revealed, beyond reasonable doubt, the strategic need for a comprehensive governance model, where the public administration assumes functions of civil defence, infrastructure reconstruction, information control and international diplomacy (Beliakova and Detzner, 2023).



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In the words of Baillie et al. (2024) in risk management, institutional transparency and rapid response to complex humanitarian crises are recurrent components of this new paradigm. National security is therefore extended to a concept of continuous crisis governance, in which the public administration acts as the executor of policies and a direct guarantor of the survival of the modern state.

Since 2014, Russia's armed aggression has led to profound transformations in Ukraine's administrative structure. The outbreak of the conflict in Crimea and the Donbas forced the reconfiguration of the state apparatus, moving resources to strategic areas and strengthening defence and emergency management systems. Therefore, as Beliakova and Detzner (2023) state, public institutions had to adapt to an environment of continuous threat, where decentralization, digitalization, and military-civilian coordination became key to maintaining government functionality. In this way, the redesign of the internal security system, the creation of specialized agencies, and the reform of the defense sector all contributed to modernizing the Ukrainian public management model (Brotman, 2022).

In fact, during the most intense phase of the conflict, especially after the total invasion of 2022, the Ukrainian administration underwent an unprecedented process of resilience and institutional transformation. Thus, the application of smart state policies made it possible to maintain governance under warlike conditions, relying on digital technologies, international cooperation, and strategic communication capabilities (Fedorov, 2025). For the authors of this research article, these innovations not only responded to the urgency of the conflict but also laid the foundations for an adaptive administrative model,



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characterized by flexibility, transparency, and territorial integration. Likewise, the war became a catalyst for public reforms aimed at strengthening the legitimacy and operational capacity of the State (Bevir et al., 2003).

In this order of ideas, the central objective of this research is to historically analyze the public administration mechanisms implemented by the Ukrainian State between 2014 and 2025, to guarantee national security in the face of Russian armed aggression, identifying in the process their institutional transformations, civil defense strategies, and intergovernmental coordination processes. From this general objective, two key questions arise: how has the Ukrainian administrative structure evolved in the face of the challenge of a protracted war? and to what extent have the institutional mechanisms designed strengthened the security and cohesion of the State in the face of external aggression?

The research is organized into three main sections. The first presents the theoretical framework, in which the literature on national security, hybrid warfare and public administration in conflict contexts is reviewed. The second offers a detailed description of the methodology, based on a historical approach that allows the analysis of institutional evolution over the period 2014-2025. In the third section, divided into three subsections, the findings obtained in the research are analyzed and discussed. Finally, the conclusions are presented, in which the main transformations of the Ukrainian state apparatus are assessed, and recommendations are made for future national security policies, integrated into public management.



## 1. Theoretical bases and reviewed literature

The conceptualization of hybrid warfare emerges first from U.S. military thought, especially through the pioneering work of Hoffman (2007), who, at the time, tried to overcome the simplistic dichotomy between conventional and irregular warfare. However, the application of the term to the Ukrainian conflict has generated significant conceptual debates.

Schmid (2019), on the other hand, argues that the specificity of hybrid warfare lies in the strategic orchestration of civilian and military means directed towards non-military centers of gravity, exploiting the vulnerable interfaces between traditional categories of order and responsibility. However, a fundamental contradiction persists, and that is that, while some authors, such as Hoffman (2007), postulate hybrid warfare as a novel phenomenon of the twenty-first century, others argue that it is simply historical practices with renewed terminology (Schmid, 2019). This conceptual ambiguity makes it difficult to establish consistent analytical frameworks to assess their real impact on national security.

Critical analysis of the most widely disseminated documentary sources available on the web reveals troubling gaps in the Western literature on hybrid warfare, particularly with regard to its universal applicability. According to Bebler (2015), the Ukrainian experience showed that Russian success in Crimea depended on extremely specific conditions, among which are: pro-Russian population, pre-existing military presence, island geography and previous infiltration of Ukrainian security forces, among others.



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These (objective and subjective) conditions seriously question the transferability of the hybrid model to other geopolitical contexts. Moreover, as Hoffman (2007) argues, there is a problematic tendency in Western academia to misinterpret Gerasimov's paper as the "Russian hybrid doctrine," when in fact it represents a comprehensive analysis of the potential threats perceived by Moscow. This systematic misinterpretation reflects Western conceptual projections on Russian strategic reality, often generating distorted analyses that hinder a genuine understanding of contemporary conflict dynamics.

Studies on public administration in conflict contexts reveal substantial theoretical contributions, but also considerable methodological limitations. In the words of Nehara et al. (2025), the Ukrainian case demonstrates that administrative systems can maintain functionality, under martial law, through pragmatic institutional adaptations, such as the creation of temporary military administrations that assume local governmental competences.

However, in many ways the existing literature lacks qualitative analyses that examine the sustainability of these transformations, beyond the immediate crisis phase. For the underwriters of this research, particularly worrying is the paucity of work on the inherent tensions between centralization necessary for national defense and decentralization required for effective democratic governance. This theoretical gap or lacuna prevents us from understanding, beyond all reasonable doubt, how emergency administrative structures can be institutionalized without permanently eroding fundamental democratic principles.

For authors such as Baillie et al. (2024), the Ukrainian war experience also exposes significant contradictions in the literature on security sector reform.



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While traditional theoretical frameworks posit that successful reform requires prolonged periods of peace and institutional stability, Ukraine has implemented substantial reforms, simultaneously with active combat operations. This empirical reality, which cannot be denied, directly challenges conventional assumptions about sequencing and enabling conditions for security sector transformation.

Moreover, as Landgeist (2023) states, an unresolved debate persists in geopolitical studies as to whether government digitalization – exemplified by the Diia platform (ecosystem created by the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine) – represents a concrete experience of systemic resilience or, simply, technical efficiency that could coexist, as in fact happens, with deeper structural weaknesses. Again, in this particular case, the literature consulted (Schmid, 2019; Hoffman, 2007), lack critical analyses of the risks of excessive technological dependence in contexts where the digital infrastructure itself is a strategic target for hybrid adversaries.

Synthesizing the main theoretical contributions reviewed, the heuristic contributions of Schmid (2019), on the strategic nature of hybrid warfare as a phenomenon that operates in vulnerable interfaces; the works of Hoffman (2007), on the convergence of regular and irregular threats in the contemporary conflict spectrum, stand out. For its part, the research of The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (2025), on comprehensive resilience ecosystems in hybrid scenarios; and the institutional analyses on administrative adaptation under extreme stress, documented by researchers from the Ukrainian public system (Fedorov, 2025), allow us to understand the challenges that the public sector is experiencing on a day-to-day basis during the war.



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However, these contributions coexist with substantial theoretical gaps regarding the post-conflict sustainability of emergency institutional transformations, the applicability of public management concepts developed from particular experiences such as the Diia platform, and the effective articulation between multidimensional national security and the preservation of democratic values, fundamental in contexts of prolonged existential threat. for the Ukrainian state and society.

## **2. Methodology**

This research was developed within the epistemological framework of legal-institutional history, understood as the disciplinary field that analyzes the evolution of the normative and organizational structures of the State, in specific historical contexts. The legal-institutional history, according to Adams' (1992) proposal, constitutes an approach that links administrative processes with legal frameworks and transformations of the State, allowing us to understand hermeneutically how public institutions respond to their existential crises.

In the Ukrainian context, this conceptual framework was particularly appropriate given that the administrative transformations (post-2014) were mediated by constitutional reforms, emergency legislation, and restructuring of government powers. Thus, the central methodological technique consisted of the historical analysis of the mechanisms of public administration for the national security of Ukraine in response to the Russian armed aggression during the period 2014-2025, examining primary and secondary documentary sources through systematic historiographical procedures, such as the internal and external criticism of the sources (Halkin, 1993).



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As Bevir et al. (2003) assume, the paradigm of legal-institutional history adopted clearly recognizes that administrative institutions are not static entities, but rather historical constructions whose functions, legitimacy and efficacy are dialectically shaped in relation to changing geopolitical contexts. This perspective of analysis, based on historical institutionalism, considers, at the same time, that administrative trajectories depend on critical junctures – such as the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the total invasion of Ukraine in 2022 – that permanently reconfigure governance structures.

Therefore, the historical analysis transcended the descriptive chronology alone to interrogate how specific administrative decisions, in each time and space, responded to hybrid threats, how civil-military coordination mechanisms were institutionalized, and what patterns of continuity and rupture characterize the evolution of the Ukrainian state apparatus under war pressure.

As Greben and Chyrva (2025) argue, it is a methodological approach that privileges processual understanding over simple functionalist explanations, always recognizing that contemporary Ukrainian public administration represents a complex synthesis between dissimilar legacies, such as the Soviet one, the Europeanizing aspirations and the pragmatic adaptations imposed by the conditions of hybrid warfare.

Specifically, a rigorous criterion was used for the selection of documentary sources of proven academic value, privileging exclusively materials published in scientific journals indexed in high-impact international databases —particularly Scopus and Web of Science—, official documents of Ukrainian and international government agencies, academic monographs developed in universities of recognized prestige, without omitting information from blogs/media and think

tank documents. The methodological selectivity of the sources consulted responded to the need to guarantee the authenticity, credibility and representativeness of the materials analyzed, fundamental criteria established by Kipping et al. (2014) for historical research in institutional contexts.

In addition to all the above, the historiographical technique of internal and external criticism of the sources was also systematically applied, a procedure that, according to Halkin (1993), involves:

- Verification of authorship and documentary origin.
- Accurate dating by triangulation with independent sources.
- Evaluation of possible institutional or political biases.
- Contrast with contemporary documentation to detect inconsistencies.
- Hermeneutical analysis to contextualize statements within their original discursive frameworks.

This methodology of critique of the selected sources was particularly important, given that many documents on Ukrainian national security were produced in highly politicized and ideologized contexts, where propaganda constitutes the integral component of hybrid war strategies (Hoffman, 2007). In addition, the research was structured in five methodological stages, clearly differentiated, each corresponding to the specific requirements of the epistemological architecture of the legal-institutional history adopted. These stages were:

- Identification and delimitation of the historical-institutional problem, where the central questions about Ukrainian administrative transformations were



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established and the period 2014-2025 was defined as the time frame justified by the annexation of Crimea as a turning point.

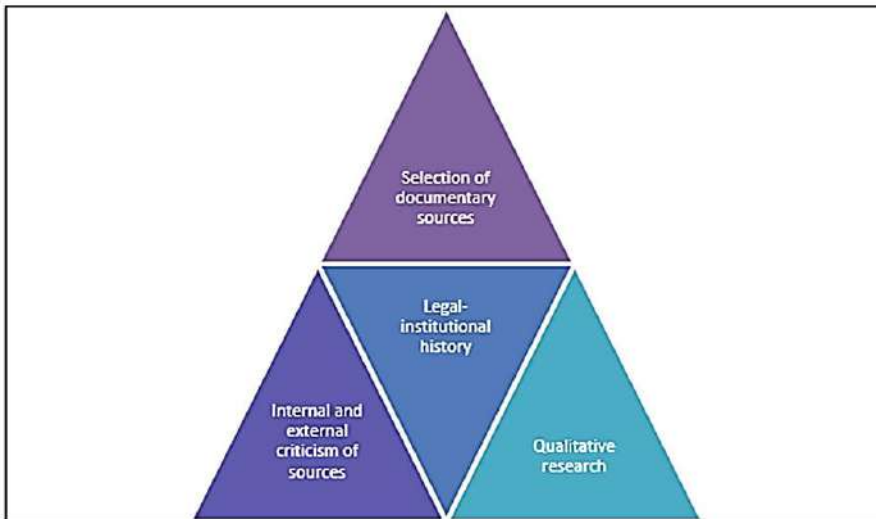
- Systematic search and compilation of documentary sources by consulting academic digital repositories, Ukrainian government databases, archives of international organizations and specialized literature, applying explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria.

- Exhaustive historiographical critique of each selected source, applying the principles of authenticity, credibility, representativeness and intentionality, systematically documenting the evaluation process with a view to its traceability (Halkin, 1993).

- Historical-institutional analysis and interpretation through the thematic codification of the documentation, identification of temporal patterns, construction of explanatory narratives about administrative transformations, and triangulation of multiple sources to validate our interpretations of the topic.

- Synthesis and construction of historical-historiographical conclusions, integrating the specific findings into coherent interpretations on the evolution of the Ukrainian administrative apparatus, for national security, evaluating in the process the continuities and institutional ruptures in the context of prolonged hybrid war.

**Diagram 1.** Key aspect of the methodological design of the research.



Source: prepared by the authors (2025).

## 2.1. Materials and documentary corpus

The documentary corpus of this research is based on normative and institutional primary sources produced by the Ukrainian state between 2014 and 2025. Consequently, laws passed by the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian parliament) were analyzed, including the Law on the Legal Regime of Martial Law (enacted in 2015 and substantially amended in 2022), the Law on Social and Legal Protection of Military Personnel and Their Families (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1992), and legislation on administrative decentralization adopted from 2015 onwards.

Presidential decrees related to the establishment and extension of martial law from 24 February 2022 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2022), Cabinet of Ministers resolutions on digitalisation of public services and creation of the Diia



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system, and the Public Administration Reform Strategy for 2022-2025, adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in July 2021 and updated in 2022 following the Russian invasion, were also discussed. These documents constituted the normative basis for reconstructing the legal-institutional evolution of the Ukrainian state apparatus, in response to Russian armed aggression.

As a complement to the primary sources, international academic and institutional secondary sources of recognized scientific prestige were incorporated. Peer-reviewed articles published in journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, such as: *Government Information Quarterly* (Gustafsson et al., 2025), *Journal on Baltic Security* (Schmid, 2019), *Public Administration Review* (Adams, 1992) and *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* (Kurnyshova, 2023) were consulted.

In addition, technical and strategic reports produced by international organizations were analyzed, including the United States Institute of Peace study on the future of the security sector in Ukraine (Baillie et al., 2024), the administrative reform reports of the European Union and the SIGMA program, documents of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, 2025), and analysis by specialized think tanks such as the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies (Hoffman, 2007) and the Atlantic Council (Coblentz, 2024). Everything indicates that this combination of sources guaranteed the methodological triangulation between state regulations, independent academic analysis and external institutional evaluations.

The criteria for document selection were established according to principles of methodological rigor in historical-institutional research and legal



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hermeneutics (Campos, 1994). Therefore, only verifiable official documents (laws, decrees, government resolutions with official numbering and date of enactment), academic articles subject to peer review in journals of international impact, and reports from recognized multilateral organizations were included. The exclusion criteria eliminated journalistic sources without institutional support, personal blogs, political statements without a regulatory basis, and classified or restricted access documents.

Similarly, the temporal delimitation (2014-2025) was justified by the annexation of Crimea as a turning point that initiated the hybrid war, extending to the present as a period of institutional consolidation under prolonged war. The analytical periodization distinguished three specific phases that are recursive throughout the article: 2014-2021 (hybrid war and initial institutional reform), 2022-2023 (total invasion and emergency management), and 2024-2025 (institutional consolidation under sustained conflict). This structure made it possible to systematically track the evolution of administrative mechanisms for national security at each stage of the conflict (Kipping et al., 2014; Nehara et al., 2025).

**Table 1.** General classification of documentary sources used in research (2014-2025).

Type of documentary source	Subtype	Quantity	Representative examples	Methodological function
<b>Normative primary sources.</b>	National laws.	3	Law on the Legal Regime of Martial Law (2015, amendment. 2022); Law on the Social Protection of Military Personnel and their Families (2023); Decentralization Law (2015).	Direct legal basis of institutional analysis.
	Presidential decrees.	2	Decree establishing martial law (24/02/2022); Decrees extending mobilization.	Evidence of Emergency Executive Decisions.
	Government resolutions.	4	Public Administration Reform Strategy 2022–2025; Resolutions on Diia and ProZorro; Regulations on military administrations.	Strategic and operational framework for reforms.
<b>Institutional primary sources.</b>	Official Government Reports.	3	Reports from the Ministry of Digital Transformation; Annual Reports of the Cabinet of Ministers; National Security Council Documents.	Traceability of implementation of public policies.
<b>Academic Secondary Sources.</b>	Peer-reviewed articles (Scopus/WoS)	5	Gustafsson et al. (2025), <i>Government Information Quarterly</i> ; Schmid (2019), <i>Journal on Baltic Security</i> ; Nehara et al. (2025), <i>CERIDAP</i> .	Scientific validation and theoretical analysis.

Type of documentary source	Subtype	Quantity	Representative examples	Methodological function
	Academic Book Chapters.	1	Kipping et al. (2014), <i>Organizations in Time</i> (Oxford University Press).	Methodological framework for source criticism.
<b>International institutional sources.</b>	Reports from multilateral organizations.	3	United States Institute of Peace (Baillie et al., 2024); European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (2025); Informes UE/PNUD.	External and comparative perspective.
	Analysis of specialized think tanks.	3	Potomac Institute (Hoffman, 2007); Atlantic Council (Coblentz, 2024); Robert Schuman Foundation.	Strategic and political contextualization.
<b>Sources of institutional dissemination.</b>	Political Analysis Publications.	2	VoxEU (Arends et al., 2023); e-Governance Academy (Fedorov, 2025).	Dissemination of reform results.
	Verified institutional news.	1	Interfax (2025) on Martial Law Extensions.	Confirmation of official dates and events.
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>27</b>		

Source: prepared by the authors (2025).

## 2.2. Criteria for inclusion/exclusion of documentary sources

The criteria for documentary inclusion were established in accordance with methodological standards of historical-institutional research and public policy analysis. Thus, only first-rate official normative documents were included, verifiable through Ukrainian government repositories (Verkhovna Rada, Cabinet



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of Ministers, National Security Council), with official numbering, date of promulgation and accessible full text.

In the academic field, we repeat, articles published in journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science, submitted to peer review, with assigned DOI and that directly addressed issues of public administration, national security, institutional reform or government digitalization in Ukraine between 2014 and 2025 were selected. International institutional reports had to come from recognized multilateral organizations or research institutes with verifiable academic track records (USIP, Hybrid CoE, Brookings Institution), guaranteeing institutional authority and transparent methodology (Kipping et al., 2014).

On the other hand, the exclusion criteria operated to eliminate sources that compromised scientific rigor or introduced uncontrollable biases. Journalistic articles without institutional or academic support, personal blogs, political statements without normative basis, and propaganda documents of any origin (Russian or Ukrainian) that did not meet verifiability standards were systematically excluded.

Secondary sources that cited information from third parties without direct access to primary documents ("citation citations"), classified or restricted access documents that were impossible to verify, and materials published outside the 2014–2025-time frame were also discarded, except for exceptions justified in the theoretical framework (Hoffman, 2007; Aristotle, 1916). The rigorous application of these criteria guaranteed a coherent, verifiable and replicable documentary corpus, which is essential for the validity of the proposed historical-legal analysis (Nehara et al., 2025; Gustafsson et al., 2025).

**Table 2.** Operational criteria applied during the construction phase of the documentary corpus.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	<b>Exclusion Criteria</b>
<b>Document Type.</b>	Laws, decrees, official resolutions; peer-reviewed articles (Scopus/WoS); reports from multilateral organizations (UN, EU); Studies by recognized think tanks.	Personal blogs, journalistic articles without institutional authorship, political statements without normative basis, unverifiable propaganda.
<b>Time period.</b>	Documents produced or in force between 2014-2025; theoretical framework prior to 2014 when conceptually necessary.	Post-2025 documents; historical sources prior to 2014 with no direct relevance to the object of study.
<b>Verifiability.</b>	Documents with official numbering, DOI, stable URL in institutional repositories; clear authorship (individual or institutional).	Documents without identifiable authorship, anonymous sources, classified or restricted access materials.
<b>Idioma.</b>	English, Ukrainian (with official translation).	Other languages with no official translation available.
<b>Accessibility.</b>	Public access (open access, government repositories, digital libraries).	Payment documents without institutional access, confidential material.
<b>Thematic relevance.</b>	Public administration, national security, institutional reforms, government digitalization, civil-military coordination, decentralization.	Purely operational military issues, geopolitical analyses without an administrative-institutional component.
<b>Methodological quality.</b>	Explicit methodology, peer review, rigorous academic citation, transparency of sources.	Citations of citations without access to primary source, studies without declared methodology, sources with undeclared conflicts of interest.

**Source:** prepared by the authors (2025).

### 2.3. Document traceability

To guarantee the traceability of the documentary, sources selected in this research, four (04) analytical tables are incorporated that organize the

information according to the standards of transparency and academic traceability indicated by Kipping et al. (2014). Consequently, each table associates the sources with the findings, the documentary type, the date and the interpretative notes relevant to the historical-historiographical reconstruction of the period 2014-2025. Likewise, the sources are in the section or phase of the analysis where they were heuristically most useful (search and contrast of normative data) or hermeneutically significant (interpretation of administrative and conceptual processes).

In this way, the documents are distributed in the three study periods and in the conceptual and methodological framework – initial reform, emergency management and institutional consolidation – articulating primary sources (laws, decrees, resolutions and official reports) with secondary sources (peer-reviewed articles, international reports, comparative studies). For the authors of this research, the organization of the sources not only allows us to follow the connection between evidence and argument, but also ensures the methodological replicability of the study, by complying with the criteria of exhaustiveness, verifiability and formal coherence that characterize rigorous historical-institutional research, as Halkin (1993) states.

**Table 3.** Period 1: Hybrid war and initial institutional reform (2014-2021).

Manuscript Affirmation/Finding	Primary/Secondary Source	Document Type	Date	Methodological notes
<b>Start of decentralization reform after Euromaidan.</b>	Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (2014). Concept of Local Self-Government Reform and Territorial Structure of Power.	Official Strategy Document.	1 April 2014.	Adopted on the initiative of Deputy Prime Minister Groysman; Normative basis of decentralization.

<b>Manuscript Affirmation/Finding</b>	<b>Primary/Secondary Source</b>	<b>Document Type</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Methodological notes</b>
<b>Creation of the ProZorro system for transparency in public procurement.</b>	ProZorro pilot project (2015); Open Contracting Partnership (Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, 2016).	Electronic System / Technical Report.	February 2015.	Verified pilot launch; documented savings of UAH 1.5 billion in the first year.
<b>Mandatory implementation of ProZorro in all public entities.</b>	Law of Ukraine on Public Procurement (2021- Reform) (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2016).	Law.	May 2016.	Mandatory from 1 August 2016; Complete system migration.
<b>Transfer of fiscal powers to local governments through decentralization.</b>	Ukraine's decentralization reforms since 2014 (Romanova & Umland, 2019).	Academic report.	2014-2019.	Increase in local budgets from 42% (2014) to 50% (2018).
<b>Creation of self-sufficient amalgamated territorial communities (ATCs).</b>	Ministry of Regional Development (2015–2019). Decentralization Monitoring (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2014).	Government reports.	2015-2019.	925 ATCs created by July 2019, covering 28.3% of the population.
<b>Security sector reform and strengthening of the National Security Council.</b>	Governance and security sector reform in Ukraine (Beliakova & Detzner, 2023).	Institutional report.	4 October 2023.	Analysis of institutional reforms in defense and interior 2014-2022.
<b>Adoption of the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2022-2025.</b>	Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Ordinance No. 831-p (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2021).	Official Resolution.	21 July 2021.	Governing document approved prior to invasion; updated in 2022.

**Source:** prepared by the authors (2025).

**Table 4.** Period 2: Total invasion and emergency management (2022-2023)

Manuscript Affirmation/Finding	Primary/Secondary Source	Document Type	Date	Methodological notes
<b>Martial law instituted on February 24, 2022, at 5:30 am.</b>	Presidential Decree No. 64/2022; Law of the Verkhovna Rada No. 2102-IX. (President of Ukraine, 2022).	Presidential Decree + Parliamentary Act.	24 February 2022.	Approved by 300 deputies; Initial duration 30 days.
<b>Temporary restriction of constitutional rights under martial law (Arts. 30-34, 38, 39, 41-44, 53)</b>	Law of Ukraine "On the Legal Regime of Martial Law" (applied 2022) (President of Ukraine, 2022).	Constitutional Law.	24 February 2022.	Depositary notification to the UN; Proportional restrictions according to the European Commission (2023).
<b>Successive extensions of martial law in 90-day periods.</b>	Verkhovna Rada decisions (multiple extensions) (Interfax-Ukraine, 2025).	Parliamentary resolutions.	2022-2025.	16 extensions until October 2025; Last approved with 317 votes (5 Nov 2025 - 3 Feb 2026).
<b>Creation of territorial military administrations to assume local government functions.</b>	"Law on the Legal Regime of Martial Law" (President of Ukraine, 2022) (art. 4); (Nehara et al., 2025).	Law + Academic Article.	2022.	Functional analysis in <i>CERIDAP</i> ; institutionalized civil-military coordination.
<b>Expansion of the Diia system to keep public services under bombardment.</b>	Ministry of Digital Transformation (e-Governance Academy Foundation, 2025); (Fedorov, 2025).	White Paper + Institutional Article.	2022-2025.	Operational platform during invasion; Documented Digital Resilience Case.
<b>Adaptive governance through inter-agency coordination and digitalization.</b>	Adaptive governance during war (Gustafsson et al., 2025).	Academic article ( <i>Quarterly government information</i> ).	2025.	Empirical study on the collaborative provision of digital services at war.

Source: prepared by the authors (2025).

**Table 5.** Period 3: Institutional consolidation and protracted war (2024-2025).

<b>Manuscript Affirmation/Finding</b>	<b>Primary/Secondary Source</b>	<b>Document Type</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Methodological notes</b>
<b>Institutionalizing digital reforms as a permanent policy.</b>	Ukraine's Digital Transformation: Innovation for Resilience (Mamedieva, 2025).	Institutional article (Harvard CID).	1 April 2025.	Post-invasion Diia ecosystem consolidation analysis.
<b>Hybrid governance combining central authority with local autonomy.</b>	Ukraine's path to the European Union (Bulana y Holubytska, 2025).	Institutional analysis (Robert Schuman Foundation).	22 June 2025.	Evaluation of reforms in the context of European integration.
<b>Strengthening inter-municipal cooperation and resilient decentralization.</b>	Ukraine's Resilience: Administrative Reform Boosted Social Capital (Arends et al., 2023).	Academic article (VoxEU)	August 31, 2023.	Empirical evidence of increased social trust due to reforms.
<b>Integration of emergency structures into the regular administration.</b>	Wartime system of public administration entities (Nehara et al., 2025).	Academic article ( <i>CERIDAP</i> )	2025.	Analysis of the legal standardization of military administrations.
<b>Maintaining the rule of law and opening to European integration.</b>	Ukraine at War: Resilience and Regulatory Agency (Kurnyshova, 2023).	Academic article (Central <i>European Journal</i> ).	2023.	Theoretical framework on regulatory resilience and state agency.
<b>Law on the Social Protection of Military Personnel and Their Families.</b>	Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1992).	Law.	Refurbished several times.	Legal framework for social protection in the context of prolonged war.

**Source:** prepared by the authors.

**Table 6.** Conceptual and methodological framework (transversal).

Concept/methodology applied	Bibliographic references	Document Type	Date	Role in research
<b>Hybrid War Theory.</b>	Conflict in the 21st century: the rise of hybrid wars (Hoffman, 2007).	White Paper.	7 December 2007.	Conceptual framework to characterize the conflict in the period (2014-2021).
<b>Methodology of criticism of historical sources.</b>	Analysis and interpretation of historical sources (Kipping et al., 2014).	Book Chapter (Oxford UP).	2014.	Methodological basis of documentary analysis.
<b>Hybrid Threat Concept and State Resilience.</b>	Strategic Guidelines for Countering Hybrid Threats (The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, 2025).	Institutional report.	12 March 2025.	Threat Contextualization and Defense Strategies.
<b>Periodization of the war in Ukraine (2014-2025).</b>	Periodization of Russia's large-scale war against Ukraine (Historical Center, 2025).	Historical analysis.	20 February 2025.	Chronological structure applied in the analysis.
<b>History as a battlefield in the Russian invasion.</b>	History and historiography mean a key battlefield in the Russian invasion (Coblentz, 2024).	Scientific article (Atlantic Council).	26 September 2024.	Historical-ideological dimension of the conflict.

**Source:** own elaboration (2025).

## 2.4. Possible methodological limitations

Beyond the apparent methodological coherence of the research, this qualitative design has inherent limitations that must be explicitly recognized to adequately contextualize the findings. In principle, the selective availability of documentary sources introduces potential biases, since much classified national security information remains inaccessible and certain administrative documents may have been lost or destroyed during military operations. Second, historical-documentary analysis, due to its retrospective nature, faces, in the words of Campos (1994), hermeneutical challenges to capture informal dynamics, organizational cultures, and undocumented decision-making processes that, however, significantly influence administrative effectiveness.

It is also possible that the temporal proximity of the period studied—especially the post-2022 events—limits the availability of consolidated secondary analyses and reduces the historical perspective sufficient for definitive assessments of a war that continues to unfold. Finally, the context of active warfare introduces ethical considerations about the balanced representation of opposing narratives, although this research privileged verifiable academic sources over propaganda materials of any origin. In any case, these objective and subjective limitations, far from invalidating the findings of this work, underscore the need for provisional, never definitive, interpretations subject to revision as new evidence and complementary studies on the subject emerge.

### **3. Evolution of the Ukrainian administrative structure in the face of the challenge of a protracted war (2014-2025)**

Although it is not the purpose of this research to explore the origins of the war conflict before 2014, the date that marks the invasion of the Crimean peninsula by pro-Russian forces, marking a geopolitical turning point in the relationship between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, there is an outstanding set of historiographical materials, such as: (D'Anieri, 2007) (Kuzio, 2015) (Molchanov, 2002) (Wilson, 2014) and (Romanova & Umland, 2019) that can be very useful, to understand panoramas the dialectical tensions and the previous historical context that goes, from the collapse of the Union of Soviet Republics USSR, at the end of the twentieth century, and the arduous process of the construction of a sovereign and independent state in Ukraine, with a defined national identity, in terms of culture, language and customs, for centuries.

Responding to how the Ukrainian administrative structure has evolved in the face of the challenge of a prolonged war requires, in principle, to contextualize historically the different moments that make up the conflict and its direct impact on public administration mechanisms aimed at national security. Much more so when, since 2014, Ukraine has undergone a process of continuous transformation, marked by the need to maintain institutional stability, during armed aggression and economic, political and social crises.

As can be read in a document authored by The Economist Group (2022), the reforms initiated after Euromaidan not only aimed to strengthen governance, but also to redefine the relationship between the state, citizens and the armed forces. Each stage of the war – from the initial hybrid conflict to the total invasion and prolongation of the conflagration – has demanded, as one might



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assume, specific adjustments in the administrative architecture of the public sector. Therefore, the evolution of State structures should not be understood as a simple military response, but as a comprehensive process of State reconstruction in the face of an environment of prolonged and changing war. For these and other reasons:

Governance reforms are essential to strengthen the capacity, stability and democratic legitimacy of the Ukrainian state. To this end, the Ukrainian government has implemented a broad program of reforms since 2014. This is particularly evident in digital transformation, through which the government has set out to improve the delivery of digital public services and improve cybersecurity. An ambitious decentralization project also strengthened the powers of local authorities, with the establishment of a new administrative and territorial structure that served as the basis for all other sectoral reforms (including those in education, health and public finance). (The Economist Group, 2022, p. 3)

In fact, during the first period (2014-2021), defined by hybrid warfare (Hoffman, 2007), Ukraine embarked on a cycle of profound reforms that sought to strengthen its state apparatus after the occupation of Crimea and the Donbas insurgency. This process was expressed in the reform of public administration, initiated in 2016 with the support of the European Union, the creation of a new legal framework of administrative procedures and the restructuring of the ministries of defense, interior and territorial administration.

A report published by Public Administration Reform (2022) explains that the modernization effort was also supported by fiscal and political decentralization, providing local authorities with greater administrative and budgetary powers. A "decentralized model" is thus taking shape, which, combined with anti-corruption policy and the growing digitalization of public



services, made it possible to partially stabilize state governance while at the same time building civilian capacities to operate in environments of prolonged conflict. In this phase, the public administration was consolidated as an instrument of civil and state resistance.

The second period (2022-2023) is characterized by the total Russian invasion and emergency administrative transformation. In this crisis scenario, the Ukrainian administration had to adapt its structures to operate under martial law, creating local military administrations that assumed civilian functions in threatened or liberated territories. There was a temporary centralization of executive power, accompanied by the integration of civil-military coordination mechanisms and fluid cooperation with international partners (Bulana & Holubytska, 2025).

At the same time, in the words of Mamedieva (2025), a phenomenon of accelerated digitalization is emerging, led by the Ministry of Digital Transformation and the expansion of the Diia system, which made it possible to sustain essential public services, guarantee the minimum functioning of the State and improve communication between citizens and government even under bombardment. This phase proved that digitalization can act as a structural tool for institutional resilience, thus enabling the continuity of the State in the most adverse conditions.

In the third period (2024-2025), authors such as Gustafsson et al. (2025) suppose that the Ukrainian administrative system began to stabilize its functioning within a context of prolonged war. At this time, the state structure shifted from crisis management to the institutionalization of a hybrid model of

governance based on inter-institutional coordination, citizen participation, and the permanent modernization of public services.

For those who subscribe to this research, this period of recent history shows the consolidation of a resilient State, where the administration combined emergency measures with a new institutional culture that integrates key principles for public administration, transparency, interoperability and accountability. Digital transformation policies, continuous administrative reform, and adaptive decentralization strengthened state legitimacy and projected Ukraine as a laboratory for institutional innovation in contexts of sustained war (Gustafsson et al., 2025). In these situations, the process of consolidating administrative capacities demonstrates the political will for constitutional and administrative reconstruction in conditions of sustained structural threat.

**Table 7.** Evolution of the Ukrainian administrative structure at different times of the war.

<b>Period</b>	<b>Key features</b>	<b>Key administrative transformations</b>	<b>Bibliographic references</b>
<b>2014-2021.</b>	Hybrid war and initial institutional reconstruction.	Political decentralization, strengthening of the administrative legal framework, beginning of the digitalization of the public sector and anti-corruption reform.	(The Economist Group, 2022).
<b>2022-2023.</b>	Total invasion and administration under martial law.	Creation of local military administrations, temporary centralization of executive power, expansion of <i>Diia</i> , and civil-military coordination.	(Mamedieva, 2025).
<b>2024-2025</b>	Protracted war and institutional consolidation.	Institutionalization of hybrid governance, comprehensive digitalization, sustained reforms and international cooperation.	(Gustafsson et al., 2025).

**Source:** prepared by the authors (2025).

For the authors of the article, Table 6 shows, from a philosophical and critical reading, that the future of the Ukrainian public administration embodies a dialectic between fragility and creation, where war not only destroys, but also reconfigures the very foundations of the nation-state. At each stage —initial reform, total emergency, and protracted consolidation— there is a continuing tension between the legitimate need to survive and the imperative to preserve some institutional justice. It is an institutional process that should be read as a contemporary manifestation of the "reason of state" that, when confronted with the sustained violence of the invading forces, produces creative forms of adaptation, without completely renouncing its normative vocation.

The political philosophy of conflict, in this context, acquires a historical dimension, since the State is not understood as a static structure, but as a dynamic entity that evolves through collective suffering. From this point of view, bureaucracy is transformed into an ethic of resistance and public administration becomes an instrument of existential affirmation of national identity. Reinterpreting the thought of Aristotles (1916), Ukraine, by sustaining the continuity of the State in extreme conditions, represents a limit case where war, paradoxically, acts as a catalyst for political modernity and, simultaneously, as a mirror of the persistent fragility of any civilizational order in times of structural crisis.

### **3.1. Institutional strengthening and state cohesion in the face of external aggression (2014-2025) in an administrative key**

Answering the question of the extent to which the institutional mechanisms designed have strengthened the security and cohesion of the Ukrainian state in the face of external aggression requires first understanding the historical stages

that defined the evolution of its public administration. As is known, the war, on the one hand, reconfigured the institutional architecture, while, on the other, it modified the logic of civilian power, the management of the territory and the relationship between citizenship and the State.

As Bulana and Holubytska (2025) argue, based on concrete empirical evidence, the process of administrative modernization that began in 2014 was determined by a dynamic of simultaneous resistance and reform; in this way, while fighting at the front, institutions were reorganized to sustain the state under extreme pressure. These stages—the initial hybrid reform, the emergency transformation during the total invasion, and the subsequent consolidation into a scenario of prolonged war—dialectically mark the chronology of institutional strengthening and, even more, of a state cohesion that articulates, on equal terms, elements such as legitimacy, resilience, and state efficiency in the midst of war. In this context, Ukraine is moving resolutely closer to the institutional model of the European Union:

Institutionally, the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers created the Government Office for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration in August 2014, which became the key coordinating body for EU-related reforms. In 2016, in response to pressure from civil society and external support from international donors, the position of Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration was introduced to strengthen political leadership in the implementation of the reform. This position ensured high-level oversight of legal approximation processes and helped resolve inter-ministerial conflicts. (Bulana & Holubytska, 2025, para., 3)

In this chronological thread, during the first period (2014-2021), institutional strengthening was based on the need to recover territorial sovereignty and rebuild the state apparatus after the administrative collapse



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caused by the Donbas crisis and the annexation of Crimea. In this way, the reforms promoted by the European Union and supported by organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided Ukraine, as Greben and Chyrva (2025) state, with new and incipient structures of transparency, accountability and civilian control of power.

In the words of Arends et al. (2023), administrative practices such as the creation of anti-corruption agencies, fiscal decentralization, the digitization of public services, and the implementation of the ProZorro system<sup>5</sup> marked a break with the country's oligarchic past. In this period, national security was strengthened more by the civic fabric than by the militarization of the State. For their part, local governments positioned themselves as protagonists of institutional resistance, building social cohesion from the public administration and affirming the principle that the State also defends itself by governing.

In the second period (2022-2023), marked by the total Russian invasion, institutional mechanisms demonstrated, in the words of Nehara et al. (2025), an unprecedented resilience in the history of Eastern Europe. Far from collapsing, as the invading forces had hoped, the Ukrainian state consolidated a model of adaptive administration, through the creation of local military directorates, coordination between levels of government and the functional continuity of civilian power under martial law. As Nehara et al. (2025) explain, according to the 2022 legal framework, these structures made it possible to maintain

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<sup>5</sup> ProZorro is Ukraine's electronic public procurement system, created in 2015 as an open platform designed to combat corruption and ensure transparency in state procurement. Its name, which is Ukrainian for "transparent," reflects its fundamental principle: to make all stages of government procurement processes visible and accessible. The system works with open-source technology and is based on a hybrid model that connects multiple certified digital marketplaces with a central database, allowing both public entities and suppliers to carry out their transactions on equal terms (Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, 2016).

constitutional operability, integrate territorial defense with public management, and, in addition, guarantee essential services beyond the growing difficulties.

In parallel, the expansion of the Diia digital system strengthened transparency and the direct link between citizens and the state, making it possible for the population to continue to participate in civic life, even under the destruction of public infrastructure. This is a stage that demonstrated that Ukrainian institutions, far from being a bureaucratic obstacle, became an active instrument of state cohesion and political legitimation in the face of the aggressor.

Finally, the third period (2024-2025) is characterized by the dialectical transition, from emergency management to institutional consolidation in a prolonged war environment. In this phase, the innovations arising from the conflict were institutionalized: inter-municipal cooperation mechanisms, responsible decentralization, regional reconstruction planning and hybrid governance that combines central authority with local autonomy (Association Européenne pour la Démocratie Locale, 2025).

At this point, it should be clarified that state cohesion was not only based on unified political command, but also on the social trust generated by the effectiveness of local administration (Arends et al., 2023). In historical terms, Ukraine has reached a unique synthesis in political and institutional terms, which is expressed in fact: a state of war that does not suppress plurality but integrates it into a cooperative model of governance. For the authors of this research, resilience here does not arise from institutional homogeneity, but from the ability to sustain functional diversity, during exceptionality, creating a model of governance that can be exemplary for States in conflict.

**Table 8.** Historical-analytical view of the central elements of institutional strengthening and state cohesion in the face of external aggression (2014-2025), in a general administrative key.

<b>Historical period (2014-2025)</b>	<b>Key institutional mechanisms</b>	<b>Impact on security and state cohesion</b>	<b>Bibliographic references</b>
<b>2014-2021: Initial institutional reform.</b>	Decentralization, anti-corruption, digitalization ( <i>ProZorro, Diia</i> ), legal strengthening of public institutions.	Consolidation of civilian control, institutional legitimacy, reconstruction of the social contract during war.	(Bulana & Holubytska, 2025).
<b>2022-2023: Total invasion and administrative emergency.</b>	Creation of military administrations, civil-military coordination, martial law, state digital expansion.	Maintaining State Functionality and Public Trust in Conditions of Total War.	(Nehara et al., 2025).
<b>2024-2025: Institutional Consolidation and Protracted War.</b>	Hybrid governance, resilient local autonomy, territorial cooperation, legal modernization.	Institutionalization of reforms, strengthened social cohesion, model of resilient state at war.	(Association Européenne pour la Démocratie Locale, 2025).

**Source:** prepared by the authors (2025).

From a historical-philosophical perspective, Table 8 on the institutional strengthening and state cohesion of Ukraine between 2014 and 2025, shows a process that goes beyond the domains of the administration of the public and embodies an ontological struggle for the continuity of the political being of the State. During the chaos of war, Ukrainian institutions became the materialization of a collective will to exist, and an effort to transform the bureaucracy into an instrument of national survival. Thus, administrative progress from democratic decentralization to the institutionalization of a resilient governance model reveals that war, far from destroying the state, has acted as its creative antagonist, forcing it to redefine itself morally and operationally.



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### **3.2. Historical analysis of public administration mechanisms for Ukraine's National Security in response to Russian armed aggression (2014-2025)**

The historical analysis of the mechanisms of public administration for national security in Ukraine, between 2014 and 2025, requires, from our point of view, a legal-institutional approach capable of integrating the political, the administrative and the social in the same hermeneutical-explanatory framework. In fact, the war forced the Ukrainian state to profoundly transform its administrative structure, while redefining its notion of sovereignty, from the perspective of public law and government management.

In its first stage (2014-2021), as indicated by the sources consulted (see table 2), the administrative mechanisms evolved under a logic of reform and containment, in this period of less than a decade. Thus, the strengthening of decentralization, the reorganization of the state apparatus and the creation of anti-corruption policies laid the foundations for a new institutional framework of a flexible and resilient type. This process, as Dehtyarenko and Chepelenko (2025) indicate, was accompanied by the regulatory modernization of the internal security system and the creation of digital platforms such as *ProZorro*, which strengthened transparency and citizen trust. The method of legal-institutional history allows us to analyze this transition as a movement of rupture with Soviet legacies, towards an administrative culture aligned with European and Western democratic values.

Throughout this first period, the public administration became an essential defence mechanism against Russian hybrid aggression. Thus, the balance between presidential leadership, the performance of the National Security Council, and intergovernmental cooperation consolidated a principle of state

continuity in the midst of the crisis (Baillie et al., 2024). Reforms in civilian control over the armed forces and the development of decentralized institutions ensured flexibility in the security response.

For its part, state legitimacy was strengthened through structures capable of integrating the executive power with local governments, providing cohesion to the state. When applying the criterion of periodization, it is observed that this stage laid the foundations of a model of progressive administrative resilience, given that the law and the administration were transformed into "instruments of civic resistance" in the face of the dissolution of the national order.

During the second period (2022-2023), Ukraine entered a phase of emergency administration under the pressure of an all-out invasion. The establishment of martial law undoubtedly implied an unprecedented legal reorganization, led by the National Security Council and the creation of territorial military administrations. These mixed structures, based on the Law on the Legal Regime of Martial Law, absorbed the functions of local governments, integrating the military command with the civil administration (see Table 3).

As Nehara et al. (2025) argue, the Ministry of Digital Transformation, through the *Diia* system, played an important role in maintaining state management, communicating with citizens and, at the same time, guaranteeing access to essential services in the midst of the physical collapse of public institutions. Therefore, the documentary analysis of this stage allows us to argue that the State not only survived but also transformed the war into an opportunity to resize its governance, strengthening social trust and legitimizing civil authority in the face of the existential challenge that war represents.



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The mechanisms of action in this period responded to a logic of coordination and controlled centralization, which allowed the State to guarantee institutional continuity. As Baillie et al. (2024) showed in their research, security bodies assumed expanded powers over the protection of critical infrastructure, while local and regional administrations were restructured to operate under single directives. In this spatiotemporal context, the predominance of Volodymyr Zelensky's presidential leadership, legitimized by the national emergency, did not annul the democratic nature of the system, but reformulated it under a paradigm of "state operational unity".

In this way, political and administrative resilience was expressed in the capacity of the public apparatus to maintain the flow of decisions, manage international aid and articulate civil-military defense. Again, from a legal-institutional reading that identifies this article (Kipping et al., 2014), this stage shows the consolidation of a modern State and aware that its legal continuity depended on the effectiveness of its administration, under the constitutional exception of war.

In the third period (2024-2025), widely debated in this research, the Ukrainian state entered a process of institutional stabilization and reconstruction. The transition from emergency administration to protracted consolidation required the integration of the mechanisms created during the war into ordinary administration. In the words of Kurnyshova (2023), Ukraine has moved towards a form of hybrid governance in which central power and local autonomy coexist in a functional balance, not free of tensions.

In practice, it is a model of intermunicipal cooperation, which made it possible to articulate territorial reconstruction with national strategic planning. In



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addition, transparency and digital control of resources were institutionalized as permanent practices, reinforcing the principle of public accountability. According to Kurnyshova (2023), the legitimacy of Ukrainian institutions was strengthened, underpinned by a renewed relationship between the state and citizens based on mutual trust and civic participation. Otherwise, it is good to remember that:

For decades, Ukraine was often perceived in the West as a weak, Russian-dependent, peripheral country (see, for example, Gil, 2015) that did not resist the annexation of Crimea much and could not prevent the occupation of Donbas in 2014. However, following the resumption of the Russian invasion on February 24, 2022, this situation has changed significantly: Ukrainian society has shown its determination to fight the most resourceful invader, which boosted Ukraine's positions both on the battlefields and in relations with its international partners. (Kurnyshova, 2023, p. 81)

In short, the process of institutional consolidation was characterized by the progressive insertion of the structures created in the emergency, within the superior framework of administrative law. Regulations adapted to the context of war, such as the Law on Military Administrations (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2023) and the regulatory framework of the National Security Council, were harmonized with European standards of public governance.

At the same time, the process of legal normalization represented a legal milestone in the evolution of the rule of law under conditions of war. As Beliakova and Detzner (2023) state, the opening towards European integration and the strengthening of citizen control mechanisms over public management consolidated Ukrainian resilience as a state policy. From a historical standpoint,



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this period confirms that the war, far from destroying institutionality, forced it to reinvent itself in a democratic and civic-defensive key.

## **Conclusion**

Everything indicates that Ukraine's national security, when examined from the perspective of a beleaguered state, whose very existence is threatened by a foreign power seeking to eliminate its sovereignty, transcends any conventional definition to become an ontological question that affects, in essence and existence, the entire political, social and cultural project of the Slavic nation. Therefore, in the Ukrainian case, the Russian aggression that began in 2014 does not simply constitute a territorial or geopolitical conflict, but a direct challenge to the historical legitimacy of the Ukrainian state as an autonomous and independent entity, an issue that, as Brotman (2022) demonstrates, Putin himself explicitly modulated from his 2021 speeches, denying the historical separation between Russians and Ukrainians.

Under these extreme conditions, we observe that national security acquires dimensions that legal-institutional history recognizes as belonging to States that, in their course, face structural threats to their survival. In this scenario, the public administration must guarantee the provision of ordinary government services, with the coordination of national defense, refugee management, reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure, maintenance of democratic legitimacy under martial law, and the articulation of international diplomacy to ensure external support. Functional multiplicity reveals that, in contexts of existential warfare, administrative institutions cannot be limited to traditional bureaucratic roles but must be transformed into adaptive structures capable of sustaining,



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simultaneously, a certain civilian normality together with the defensive mobilization of resistance forces.

In this common thread, we note that the Ukrainian public administration has faced the fundamental dilemma of preserving its identity as a European democratic state, while implementing extraordinary measures that, paradoxically, concentrate executive power and limit certain civil liberties through the imperatives of martial law. It is, without a doubt, a precarious balance between state survival and the preservation of democratic values, a paradox that represents one of the most complex challenges for any modern administrative system, consequently, it is worth asking how to maintain democratic legitimacy when the war emergency requires the unrestricted centralization of authority? How can we prevent the structures of exception created to respond to the war crisis from becoming permanently institutionalized, eroding the constitutional order they supposedly defend?

From our historical perspective, as Ukrainian authors who have experienced firsthand the experience of war, the Ukrainian experience demonstrates that institutional resilience is not only measured by the ability to resist external aggression, but also – and this is perhaps most importantly – by the ability to preserve foundational principles while adapting organizational structures to exceptional realities. The territorial military administrations, created after February 2022, for example, assumed local governmental powers by temporarily suspending democratic decentralization, although their justification lies, in the words of Coblentz (2024), precisely in protecting the system that temporarily modifies the war.



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In the view of legal-institutional history, which we use in this analysis, following the chronological contributions of the Historical Center (2025), we identify three main periods in the war in Ukraine, each characterized by specific transformations in the administrative mechanisms of national security.

The First Period (2014-2021): Hybrid War and Initial Institutional Reform, is subdivided into two clearly differentiated phases: the phase of annexation of Crimea and the Donbas War (February 2014-February 2015), marked by the Russian occupation of Crimea by military forces without official identification, the creation of separatist pseudo-republics in Donetsk and Lugansk backed by Moscow, and the Ukrainian response through the "Anti-Terrorist Operation" that evidenced the deep institutional weaknesses inherited from the post-Soviet period.

The Frozen Conflict and Structural Reforms Phase (2015-2021), during which the Minsk Agreements established a fragile ceasefire that allowed Ukraine to initiate substantial reforms of the national security sector, advance administrative decentralization, develop government digitalization through the Diia platform. At the same time, defensive capabilities were strengthened with Western support. We identify in this period how the Ukrainian public administration began to develop institutional mechanisms, specifically designed to operate under the persistent hybrid threat.

For what it represents, we define the Second Period (2022-2023): "Total Invasion and Emergency Administrative Transformation", as the moment of greatest institutional pressure, comprising in turn three critical stages: the First Stage of Strategic Defense (February-April 2022), when Russia launched the total invasion seeking to capture Kyiv, overthrow the legitimate government and



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install a puppet regime of Moscow; but Ukrainian forces, backed by a public administration that demonstrated unexpected resilience, they thwarted Russia's attempt at rapid conquest while preserving government continuity.

The Second Stage of Reorganization and Counteroffensive (May-November 2022), during which Ukraine liberated significant territories in Kharkiv and Kherson while implementing territorial military administrations that assumed local governance functions under warlike conditions; and the Third Stage of War of Attrition (December 2022-2023), characterised by intensive fighting in Bakhmut and other eastern towns, where we observe how the Ukrainian administration perfected its civil-military coordination mechanisms, management of critical infrastructure under systematic Russian bombardment, and maintenance of essential public services in extreme conditions. We argue that this period demonstrates how administrative structures can adapt, radically, without collapsing, when there is genuine social cohesion and political legitimacy.

We characterize the Third Period (2024-2025): Institutional Consolidation and Protracted War, by the relative normalization of emergency administrative structures and the development of a hybrid model of governance, which combines elements of the State at war with democratic functioning. During this phase, we appreciate how the Ukrainian public administration has institutionalized innovations developed under war pressure, including accelerated digitization of government services, systematic intergovernmental coordination with Western allies, reconstruction management parallel to active military operations, and maintenance of adapted democratic processes—local



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elections suspended but civilian participation in public decisions preserved through alternative mechanisms.

In a final comment, the periodization that we propose, and which may be useful for other research like this one, shows that the Ukrainian administrative transformations do not constitute chaotic improvisations, but rather, the systematic evolution of institutional capacities responding to differentiated phases of the conflict. We believe that the analytical importance of this periodization lies precisely in demonstrating that modern public administration can simultaneously sustain an existential war alongside democratic governance, if there is sufficient political will, international support and social cohesion.

In addition to all the above, we identify multiple lines of historical research that emerge from the analysis of the war in Ukraine and that are urgent to understand this conflict in all its magnitude. First, we consider necessary systematic comparative studies between the Ukrainian experience and other historical cases of states that faced existential threats while trying to preserve their democratic institutions, specifically examining how Finland post-1939; Israel in its wars of survival; or South Korea, under North Korean threat, developed similar or divergent institutional mechanisms.

Second, we recognize as a categorical imperative to investigate the dimensions of historical decolonization and national identity that underlie the conflict, analyzing how "Russian imperial narratives" about Ukraine have evolved from the Tsarist Empire to Putin, and how the construction of Ukrainian national identity has withstood centuries of attempts at forced cultural assimilation.



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Third, from the history of international law, we propose to critically examine how the global legal system has responded—or failed to respond effectively—to Russian aggression, evaluating the real effectiveness of mechanisms such as economic sanctions, international tribunals, and the application of principles of responsibility in the commission of war crimes or crimes against humanity.

Fourth, from economic and technological history, we propose that it is decisive to analyze how war has transformed development models, reconfigured global supply chains, highlighted dangerous European energy dependencies, and accelerated technological innovations, both military and civilian.

Finally, we argue that the history of ideas must interrogate how this conflict is reconfiguring fundamental concepts about national sovereignty, international order, collective security, and the future of liberal democracy in the twenty-first century, recognizing that Ukraine has become a battlefield, not only territorial, but also ideological that says a lot about the political future of Europe and the contemporary world. which will undoubtedly have implications for the current world order.

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