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Public administration in the conditions of war: strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats for the period 2014-2024 in Ukraine

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Abstract

The war between Russia and Ukraine has deep historical roots going back to the Soviet era and beyond. Simplifying things analytically, the current conflict is the result of historical tensions accumulated over decades, exacerbated to their maximum expression by the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, and Ukraine's subsequent aspirations to move closer to the West, as a free and sovereign nation-state. From the methodological coordinates of SWOT analysis, together with the hermeneutics of documentary sources carefully sectioned for their content and value, the aim of this research was to analyze the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats of the Ukrainian public administration in the context of the war, during the period 2014-2024. Among its contributions the research answers the following questions: 1) How has the capacity of the Ukrainian public administration evolved to respond to the needs of the population

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in wartime? 2) What opportunities for reform and modernization has the conflict presented for the public administration? 3) What are the main structural weaknesses that the war has exposed in the Ukrainian administrative system? and 4) What long-term threats does the Ukrainian public administration face because of the protracted conflict? It is concluded that setting clear priorities in the use of limited resources will ensure that the most critical needs are addressed first, a mission for which rational choice theory, proper to the economic conception of democracy, can be very useful.

Keywords: war in Ukraine; public administration; SWOT analysis; critical thinking; crisis and institutional resilience.

*La administración pública en las condiciones actuales de guerra:
fortalezas, oportunidades, debilidades y amenazas para el periodo
2014-2024 en Ucrania*

Resumen

La guerra entre Rusia y Ucrania tiene profundas raíces históricas que se remontan a la época soviética y más allá. Simplificando las cosas analíticamente, el conflicto actual es el resultado de tensiones históricas acumuladas durante décadas, exacerbadas a su máxima expresión por la disolución de la Unión Soviética en 1991, y las subsiguientes aspiraciones de Ucrania de acercarse a Occidente, como un Estado nación, libre y soberano por derecho propio. Desde las coordenadas metodológicas del análisis FODA, junto a la hermenéutica de fuentes documentales cuidadosamente seccionadas por su contenido y valor, el objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar las fortalezas, oportunidades, debilidades y amenazas de la administración pública ucraniana en el contexto de la guerra, durante el período 2014-2024. Entre sus aportes la investigación responde a las preguntas que siguen: 1) ¿Cómo ha evolucionado la capacidad de la administración pública ucraniana para responder a las necesidades de la población en tiempos de guerra? 2) ¿Qué oportunidades de reforma y modernización ha presentado el conflicto para la administración pública? 3) ¿Cuáles son las principales debilidades estructurales que la guerra ha expuesto en el sistema administrativo ucraniano? y 4) ¿Qué amenazas a largo plazo enfrenta la administración pública ucraniana como resultado del conflicto prolongado? Se concluye que establecer prioridades claras en el uso de recursos limitados

garantizará que se atiendan primero las necesidades más críticas, misión para la cual puede ser muy útil la teoría de la elección racional, propia la concepción económica de la democracia.

Palabras clave: guerra en Ucrania; administración pública; análisis FODA; pensamiento crítico; crisis y resiliencia institucional.

Introduction

As Mankof (2022) argues, the war between Russia and Ukraine has deep historical roots that go back even to Soviet times and beyond. The current conflict is the result of dialectical tensions built up over decades, exacerbated by the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and Ukraine's subsequent (legitimate) aspirations to move closer to the West, to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, henceforth just NATO, and the European Union EU. In this context, Putin's imperialist vision of the historical unity between Russians and Ukrainians, together with his rejection of the legitimacy of the independent Ukrainian identity, has been a key factor in the escalation of the conflict. Escalating matters, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and support for pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine marked a turning point in relations between the two countries, leading to international sanctions against Russia and increased geopolitical tensions in Eastern Europe (BBC News World, 2022).

The geopolitical consequences of this conflict have been far-reaching, altering the balance of power in Europe and beyond. For these reasons, NATO has strengthened its presence in Eastern Europe, while the United States and the European Union have imposed economic sanctions on Russia. Fearing for their own security, countries such as Finland and Sweden have reconsidered their

position of neutrality, opting to join NATO for good⁵. On the other hand, Russia has sought to strengthen its alliances with countries such as China, Iran, and North Korea, thus reshaping the global geopolitical landscape. The conflict seems to have led to a new "Cold War in the 21st century" between Russia and the West, with unusual implications for European energy security, regional stability, and the rules-based international order under international law.

Undoubtedly, the public administration in Ukraine has faced significant challenges in the context of the war. In this scenario of permanent calamity that has no foreseeable end, the competencies of the public administration include the management of essential social services, the implementation of defense and security policies, and, simultaneously, the coordination of efforts to rebuild infrastructure destroyed by the invading forces (Darkovich & Savisko, 2024). However, the institutional capacities of the Ukrainian public administration have been strengthened by international support and internal reforms, including digital modernization and the fight against corruption (National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service, 2024). Still, the constraints are considerable, including the loss of control over certain regions, the destruction of critical infrastructure, and the need to reallocate resources for the war effort.

The overall objective of this research is to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the Ukrainian public administration in the context of

⁵ In the words of internationalist Sánchez Tapia: "The request for NATO membership formalised on 18 May by Sweden and Finland before the secretary general of the organisation is nothing more than a manifestation of the growing concern with which two Nordic nations geographically close to Russia view the war initiated by Putin. The concern of these two countries about Russian behavior is not new; it goes back, at least, to the period after the Second World War. Now, however, because of the invasion of Ukraine, it has been reborn with enough strength to bring about a historic change in their respective strategic cultures, leading them to knock on the door of an Atlantic Alliance on whose periphery they have remained for decades by their own choice; always close, but always refusing to cross the threshold of full participation". (2022, par. 2).

the war during the period 2014-2024. The key questions that emerge from this goal are: 1) How has the capacity of the Ukrainian public administration to respond to the needs of the population in times of war evolved? 2) What opportunities for reform and modernization has the conflict presented for the public administration? 3) What are the main structural weaknesses that the war has exposed in the Ukrainian administrative system? 4) What long-term threats does the Ukrainian public administration face because of the protracted conflict?

For the authors of this scientific article, the theoretical utility of this documentary and qualitative research lies in its contribution to the understanding of how public administration systems adapt and function in conditions of prolonged war. From a practical perspective, the study can provide valuable knowledge for the reformulation of public policies and administrative reform strategies in Ukraine and other countries facing armed conflicts. When Ukrainian experiences are analyzed in depth, best practices and lessons learned can be identified that are applicable to other crisis or post-conflict contexts, as argued by Aniefiok Titus, Mbon and Ibanga Edem (2024), authors who are of the opinion:

Amid these, the two nations as well as other nations of the world sort means to ensure that both Russians and Ukrainians, especially the citizenry are well protected while seeking a lasting solution to the imbroglio. This required public administration as a tool to be achieved, and this comparative analysis showed it elicited different responses from international communities, in a way that saw sanctions meted out to Russia, while Ukraine received support and succour for the destruction that went on in its cities where battles are fought. Indeed, public administration remains the only constant factor at all times. (Aniefiok, *et al.*, 2024, p. 68)

At the outset, it should be clear that the potential limitations of this research include the difficulty of accessing up-to-date and fully reliable data in a war

environment, as well as the changing nature of the conflict that may affect the long-term validity of some conclusions. However, these limitations also underscore the importance of such studies for future research in the field of wartime public administration. The analysis of the Ukrainian case can serve as a starting point for comparative and longitudinal studies that examine how administrative systems can evolve and adapt over time in response to protracted conflicts.

As will be seen throughout this research, the Russia-Ukraine war, with its deep historical roots and broad geopolitical implications, has tested the resilience and adaptability of the Ukrainian public administration. For these reasons, this study seeks to examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats faced by the Ukrainian administrative system in the context of the conflict, with the firm purpose of contributing to theoretical and practical knowledge on public management in times of crisis. Despite the inherent limitations of research in conflict zones, this analysis promises to offer valuable perspectives for academics, policymakers, and public administration practitioners working in war or post-conflict contexts.

Specifically, the article is divided into five (05) parts: in the first, a review is made of the main authors who have scientifically researched the war in Ukraine, with special emphasis on the dimension of public administration; in the second part, the theories that, due to their epistemological nature, best explain the functioning of public administration and its institutional architecture; in the third, the processes that made possible the achievement of the proposed objective are described; In the fourth section, the main results obtained are analyzed and

discussed. Finally, the conclusions and recommendations of the case are presented, followed by the references cited in the text, under the APA style.

1. Bibliography consulted on public administration in crisis scenarios

This section reviews the main academic literature on public administration in time and crisis scenarios. Specifically, five (05) different works and authors were selected, located in different disciplines and perspectives of analysis, roughly pointing out their main contributions and interdisciplinary contributions to this field of study.

As is logical to suppose, public administration in times of crisis has been the object of study in various disciplines, highlighting in each case the importance of effective management in adverse contexts. A fundamental work in this area is *What Drives Successful Administrative Performance during Crises* by Moynihan, authored by Schomaker and Bauer (2020). This scientific publication analyzes how collaborative networks and knowledge management influence administrative performance during critical situations. Specifically, the study highlights that administrations that promote cooperation with other actors, including organized civil society, tend to perform better in crises, suggesting a shift towards more horizontal and collaborative models in public management. Among the general contributions of the research, the following stand out:

- While practitioners often prefer centralized and hierarchical solutions in times of crisis, this study highlights.
- the potential of reflexive and adaptive use of multifactor networks to cope with the extraordinary.

- Administrations that are prepared and that display a high quality in their network cooperation with other.
 - administrations and with civil society, on average, performed significantly better in their respective crises.
 - Knowledge management and resource sharing—both among administrative units and with civil society—
 - increase organizational ability to perform well in crisis situations.
 - Administrations do best when lessons learned in crises are accessibly stored and when previously successful.
 - crisis networks can be quickly revitalized, thus allowing for intercrisis learning—documentation of best.
 - practices during crises—via smart or traditional forms of data storing and organizational memory keeping—
 - further boost the performance of administrations during succeeding crises.
 - In the early stages of a crisis, decision makers need to invest in organizational self-awareness of how.
 - challenges are mastered and how insights about optimal coping are best passed on.
- (Schomaker & Bauer, 2020, p. 845)

Another significant contribution comes from the authorship of Peters, Pierre and Randma-Liiv (2011) and their work *Global Financial Crisis, Public Administration and Governance*. Peters *et al.* examine how financial crises have led to changes in political control over the bureaucracy and at the same time have influenced the centralization of decisions within government. Based on contrasting empirical evidence, this study shows that crises can be catalysts for organizational change, but they can also perpetuate, under certain conditions, pre-existing power structures. Either way, his analysis offers a critical perspective on

how crises affect not only public administration, but also democratic governance in general.

For its part, the controversial work *Public Administration in Times of Crisis*, edited by Kattel, Mikulowski and Peters (2011), compiles various research on the challenges faced by public administration in contexts of crisis at the international level. In short, the book offers an overall interdisciplinary approach by including contributions from scholars from Central and Eastern Europe, addressing topics such as administrative reform and multiscale emergency response. What is important is that, for the most part, the essays collected here highlight how shared experiences can shape effective strategies for public management during present and future crises. Therefore, it is clarified that:

Public administration, and the public sector more generally, is always confronting challenges to its effectiveness and efficiency. Even public programs that are apparently simple, pose interesting and complex issues about designing and administering policies. Likewise, simply managing large, complex structures for delivering public programs can be difficult, and can require highly capable and skilled public managers. Further, as governments have begun to utilize a variety of alternative methods for delivering public services the managerial and policy challenges have tended to increase. (Kattel, Mikulowski, & Peters, 2011, p. 7)

In this vein, Peter Haas (Haas, 2016), in his lecture *Good neighbors, responding first in disasters*, emphasizes the crucial role of communities in disaster response. Although not a traditional academic text but a YouTube video, his insights on community preparedness and resilience offer valuable theoretical and practical lessons on how informal structures can complement government efforts during a given crisis. Haas is right to argue that a well-prepared community

can act quickly and efficiently, which is essential to mitigate the negative effects of any crisis.

Finally, Sarumi's (2021) report, *The Effect of Diplomacy on Strategic Crisis Management*, presents for debate and discussion a theoretical framework to understand how strategic diplomacy can influence crisis management in the field of international public management. This study underscores the importance of effective communication and international networking to address complex crises. Among its contributions, the research highlights how diplomatic approaches can contribute to better coordination and response to critical situations, which is essential to ensure the success of any public administration strategy during a crisis.

In summary, the academic literature on public administration in times of crisis typically includes a multidimensional approach that combines theory and practice. Beyond their differences, the studies analyzed highlight the importance of collaborative networks, knowledge management and the active role of communities in critical situations. Moreover, crises can serve as a catalyst for reforms and as an opportunity to strengthen existing administrative structures. For these reasons, research on public administration in times of crisis is useful to understand how to improve the government's response to the future challenges of a society marked by high levels of entropy.

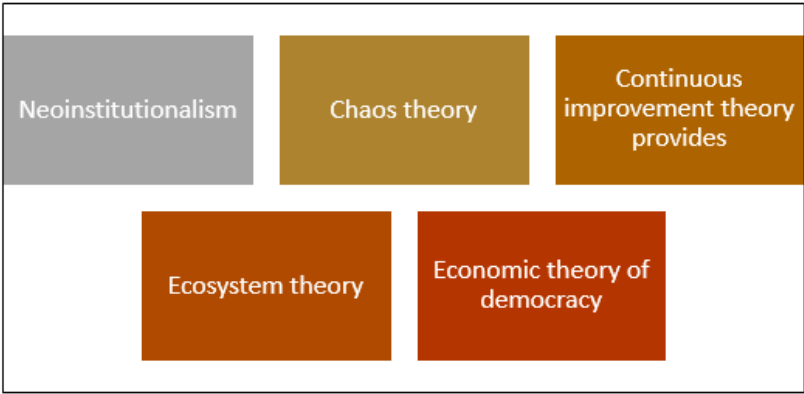
2. Theories of greater consensus on institutional functioning and public administration

It then explains how neo-institutional theory, chaos theory, ecosystem theory, economic theory of democracy and the theory of continuous improvement provide, from epistemological positions, interesting cognitive tools to fully

understand the phenomenon of public administration in the current conditions of the war in Ukraine.

In the words of Losada and Casas (2008), the neo-institutional theory originated within Political Science sheds light on understanding public administration in Ukraine during the war, since its foundations focus on how institutions influence the behavior of actors within the political and social system. In the Ukrainian context, this theory helps to analyze how public institutions have been shaped by the crisis and how these adaptations affect the government response in terms of the design and implementation of public policies. Aniefiok Titus, *et al.*, (2024) highlight that institutions must be flexible and adaptive to respond effectively to the challenges of war, always emphasizing the importance of legitimacy and public trust in administrative effectiveness. This theoretical perspective allows us to understand how institutions can evolve in times of crisis and, even more, how their strength or weakness impacts public management.

Table 1. Theoretical foundations of the research.



Source: prepared by the authors (2024).

Chaos theory also offers a valuable framework for understanding public administration in Ukraine during the war, as it emphasizes the unpredictable and nonlinear nature of complex systems. In this context, the theoretical work of Bracho Navarro, Caraballo, and Ardila (2015) allows us to interpret how the decisions taken by Putin's regime have led to unexpected and chaotic results, both in Russia and in Ukraine. This view suggests that public administrations must be prepared to adapt quickly to sudden changes and unforeseen situations, which is useful to maintain stability and efficiency in times of conflict. The capacity to respond to chaos can determine the success or failure of the public policies implemented during the war.

In this order of ideas, *the ecosystem theory* provides a comprehensive look at how different actors interact within the Ukrainian administrative system during the war. The article on de Anosov (2024) highlights how innovation ecosystems can drive growth even in challenging times. This theory emphasizes that, just as in a natural ecosystem, interactions between business, government, and civil society are vital to foster a resilient environment that can adapt to the adversities of the context. In such a way, collaboration between these actors can result in innovative solutions that strengthen public administration in the face of the challenges imposed by the war.

The economic theory of democracy by the classic author Downs (1973), is also relevant to examine how economic decisions affect governance during times of war. In this sense, the article by Trantidis (2024) entitled *Public choice economics of the Ukraine* argues that the economic decisions made by the Russian regime are influenced by its authoritarian political structure. This hypothesis, in which every rational decision seeks to maximise its benefits and at the same time

reduce costs, allows us to understand how economic dynamics can affect both the behaviour of the government and the response of the Ukrainian public administration to external aggression brought about by the invading forces. Thus, the interaction between economics and politics is a key input for designing effective strategies that ensure not only the survival of the Ukrainian state, but also its future post-conflict development.

In addition to the above, the theory of *continuous improvement* is also applied in the Ukrainian context by highlighting the need for adaptation and constant learning within public administrations in times of crisis. In this regard, Jensen, and Hoffman's (2024) *report Victory in Ukraine Starts with Addressing Five Strategic Problems* underlines that a proactive strategy is essential to address the fundamental problems of public administration and ensure an effective long-term response by the State, as a political and organizational totality of national life. Essentially, continuous improvement theory emphasizes that even during the chaos generated by war, there are always opportunities to improve administrative processes and strengthen institutional capacities. In practice, therefore, the implementation of continuous improvements can be key to ensuring, on the one hand, a relative military victory and, on the other, a successful reconstruction of the country after the conflict.

Undoubtedly, these theories provide a comprehensive epistemological framework for understanding how public administration is being managed in Ukraine during this critical period. From institutional analysis to chaotic and interactive dynamics between differentiated actors, each theory brings unique perspectives that are basic to addressing current administrative challenges. In terms of the complementarity of knowledge typical of any interdisciplinary

approach, the integration of these theoretical positions can facilitate a deeper understanding of how public administrations can adapt and thrive even in adverse circumstances, which is vital for the political and economic future of the country after the conflict with the Russian Federation.

3. Methodological procedures

In this case, documentary research was a useful tool for understanding public administration in times of war, as it made it possible to collect and, at the same time, analyze information from academic and official sources on the subject. As Jurado (2017) points out, this approach is useful when seeking to assess how public policies and administrative structures have evolved during the conflict in Ukraine, in the heat of the information collected from different primary and secondary sources. According to Ledesma Ramos (2022), efficient document management provides a consistent framework for evidence-based decision-making, which provides useful data in crisis contexts where accurate and timely information can influence administrative results.

Together with the documentary methodology, the SWOT analysis is a methodological and cognitive tool that, due to its versatility, allows the identification of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the phenomenon of public administration in Ukraine during the ongoing war. More specifically, in the first stage of research, we sought to identify the internal strengths of the administration, such as institutional resilience and the ability to adapt to changing situations. This analysis was based on documentary data that highlighted positive aspects of the administrative system, without ignoring its

contradictions, such as international support and the structural reforms implemented to respond to the needs of the present complex moment.

Table 2. Key SWOT Analysis Questions.



Source: Isaac, 2023.

Next, in the second stage of the SWOT analysis, external *opportunities* that can be taken advantage of by the Ukrainian public administration are identified. This includes access to international funds and cooperation with global organizations such as the UN, NATO or the EU to improve infrastructure and public services within the overall framework of national security policy that has been deployed in response to the invading forces. According to Lyudmila and Anzhela (2022), it should be remembered that these opportunities are crucial to strengthen the administrative system during and after the conflict, if it is combined on equal terms with a policy of modernization and democratization of public administration:

The modernization of the system of public administration in Ukraine has been underway since gaining sovereignty and continues to this day. In 2014, a constitutional reform was carried out to redistribute powers between the branches of state power. The role of the Verkhovna Rada and control over the government were strengthened. A “compact government” responsible to citizens is being formed. (Lyudmila & Anzhela, 2022, p. 41)

The third stage of the SWOT analysis focused on identifying the internal weaknesses of the administrative system, such as corruption and inefficient bureaucracy. Taken together, if not addressed within a peremptory period, these weaknesses could hinder the country's reconstruction and reform efforts after the end of the war. Therefore, by addressing these problem areas, strategies can be developed to improve administrative efficiency and transparency, which is very important when seeking to legitimize the state, gain public trust, and even more so, ensure effective government during times of war.

The last stage of the SWOT analysis was an attempt to identify external threats, such as geopolitical tensions and economic risks affecting Ukraine. These external factors can negatively influence administrative stability and, consequently, require the implementation of effective mitigation strategies in terms of public threat management policies. According to Arbeláez-Campillo and Villasmil Espinoza (2020), threat analysis allows policymakers to anticipate future scenarios (prospective vision) and plan appropriate responses to minimize the negative impact on public administration in general.

Finally, Gadamer's (2004) hermeneutics was used to interpret the results of the SWOT analysis by providing an interpretive framework for understanding the deep meaning behind the data collected. Essentially, the hermeneutical perspective allows us to explore how historical and cultural narratives influence perceptions

about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified, much more so when these factors are expressed in discourses and texts that seek to represent the urgency of the context. When this interpretive approach is successfully applied, deeper insights can be gained into how social and historical dynamics affect public administration in times of war, thus facilitating a more holistic understanding of the current Ukrainian context.

4. Analysis and discussion of results in SWOT key

Overall, Ukraine's public administration is facing exceptional conditions due to the ongoing war with Russia, which began in 2014 and intensified in 2022 (BBC News Mundo, 2022). Despite the devastation and chaos, the administrative system has demonstrated remarkable resilience and functionality. Thus, the reforms implemented since the *Revolution of Dignity* and the events of Euromaidan in 2013 have allowed public institutions and state bodies to maintain their operation, even under the pressure of an ever-developing armed conflict. In this context, administrative decentralization has given more power to local authorities, which in turn has facilitated a more agile response to the needs of the population. However, the war environment has created significant challenges, such as the interruption of services and the need to adapt to a context of constant emergency and complex humanitarian crisis. In this complex panorama, it should not be ignored that:

The full-scale Russian war of aggression has split Ukraine's story into the periods before and after February 24, 2022. Ukraine's resilience in fighting for its sovereignty and free democratic future triggered a tectonic shift in its relations with the EU, granting the country candidate status. An international coalition, comprising democratic states, has been formed to support Ukraine and provide it with humanitarian, fiscal

and military assistance on an unprecedented scale. However, the needs have remained even higher. (The BTI Transformation Index is a project of Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2024, par. 1)

In this regard, the strengths of the Ukrainian public administration at the local level include the ability to *respond quickly* and *the implementation of digital services*. For example, the development of e-government platforms has allowed citizens to access essential public services in these years of systemic crisis, even during mass displacement due to war. This innovation, on the one hand, improves administrative efficiency and, on the other, improves the quality of democracy by increasing transparency and reducing opportunities for corruption. For Darkovich and Savisko (2024), local authorities have demonstrated a remarkable ability to mobilize resources and coordinate efforts with non-governmental and community-based organizations to address the urgent needs of conflict-affected citizens.

At the regional level, Ukraine has *significant opportunities* to improve its public administration during this critical period. The war has fueled increased international interest in supporting Ukrainian reforms, which translates into access to financing and technical assistance from international bodies such as the EU. For example, financial support from the European Union is linked to conditions that promote administrative and anti-corruption reforms that strengthen democracy (Jensen & Hoffman, 2024). In addition, the war context has led to greater collaboration between regions to share resources and best governance practices, which can facilitate a more successful practice in *regional public management*.

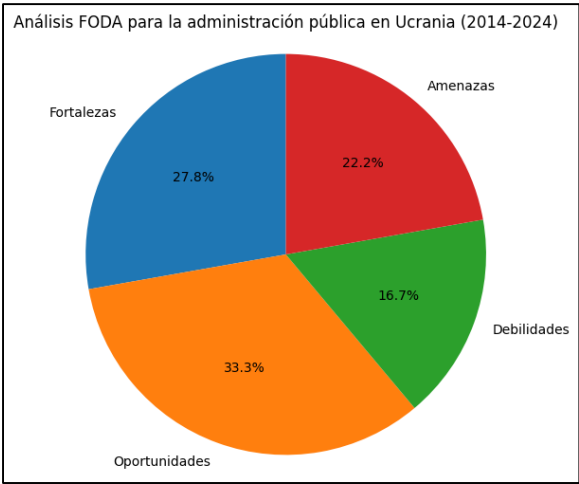
However, as usual, there are significant weaknesses in the Ukrainian public administration at the national level that need to be promptly addressed. Corruption in the government apparatus remains a major and persistent problem that

undermines public trust in government institutions, as indicated by noninstitutional theory (Losada & Casas, 2008). Despite efforts to implement anti-corruption reforms, recent cases have shown that corrupt structures can still influence critical decisions related to the war effort. But, in addition, as stated by Jensen and Hoffman (2024), there is a lack of effective coordination between different levels of government, which can result in duplication of efforts and waste of resources at critical times, which is highly problematic if one recognizes that:

The optimism that took hold after Ukraine held advancing Russian columns at bay in spring 2023 has given way to the reality of a longer war. The Russo-Ukrainian war is now longer and bloodier than 90 percent of all interstate wars in the last 200 years. Once attritional struggles cross this threshold, they last on average 962 days, or almost three years. And the end is uncertain. (Jensen & Hoffman, 2024, par. 7)

In general, and as is logical to assume, the most significant threats to the Ukrainian public administration include continued military aggression by Russia and the collateral effects of the internal conflict, such as the increase in problems of all kinds, ranging from the destruction of basic infrastructure to the demographic weakening of the national population. among others. The Russian invasion not only poses a direct challenge to Ukraine's sovereignty as an independent country, but also severely disrupts essential public services and destabilizes existing administrative structures. On the other hand, corruption can divert critical resources intended for the country's defense and recovery, thus severely affecting its ability to respond effectively to external and internal threats.

Table 3. Quantification of the variables analyzed using the SWOT standard quantitatively.



Source: Authors' elaboration based on ATLAS TI software technology.

After performing the SWOT analysis, we ordered the ATLAS TI software, in its free version and in Spanish, to quantify the variables worked on a percentage on a scale of 100%. Consequently, and without wishing to delve into an overtly quantitative investigation, Table 3, SWOT Analysis of Public Administration in Ukraine 2014-2024, visually illustrates the interrelationships between the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified in this analysis. Strengths with a percentage of 27.8% are contrasted with weaknesses, with a lower range totaling 16.7%, to show how, despite everything, certain positive aspects can help mitigate internal problems, while external opportunities, with an average range of 33.3% can be taken advantage of to further strengthen these institutional capacities of the State.

At the same time, the graph highlights how external and internal threats, which together account for a percentage of 22. 2% can have a negative impact,

both on the strengths and on the opportunities available, which is ultimately the best variable accounted for 33.3% by the Atlas in its simple qualitative quantification exercise.

In summary, the SWOT analysis reveals a complex picture for the Ukrainian public administration in times of war. While there are notable strengths and significant opportunities to move towards more efficient and transparent governance, critical weaknesses and serious threats also persist that require immediate attention from policymakers. In any case, the institutional resilience demonstrated so far is encouraging; however, it is imperative to continue working towards deep structural reforms that strengthen the administrative system and minimize as much as possible the adverse effects of the current conflict, however difficult this may be for the State and Ukrainian society.

Conclusions and recommendations

These final reflections reflect the consensus opinions of the authors of the article, in the heat of the hermeneutics of the sources consulted. First, to maximize the strengths of the Ukrainian public administration, it is crucial to strengthen institutions by implementing principles of neo-institutionalism (Losada & Casas, 2008). This implies fostering a participatory and democratic culture that allows institutions to create lasting values in society. Citizen participation must be encouraged, ensuring that political decisions reflect the needs and aspirations of the people, who are, ultimately, the sovereign factor of democracy. Together, transparency and accountability must be promoted to build public trust and legitimize government actions.

Second, institutional capacity building is another key strategy. This includes investing in the continuous training of public officials (human talent) to improve their competence and adaptability to a crisis environment. So, by strengthening its institutional architecture, Ukraine can create a more resilient environment that not only resists the onslaught of war, but also fosters long-term sustainable development. Solid institutions are the strength and fundamental pillar to maintain governance and governability, even in difficult times for national history.

Third, rationally seizing the opportunities that arise during war is a vital force in modernizing public administration. Although it may be hard to believe, every crisis can act as a catalyst to implement the necessary legal reforms that facilitate the transition to a digital and efficient public administration. In this context, the digitalization of administrative processes, on the one hand, improves the efficiency and effectiveness of public management *inputs* and, on the other, increases transparency and reduces opportunities for corruption (Transform Health, 2022). This modernizing dynamic is crucial to ensure that public services continue to function effectively under the conditions of war.

Fourth, to overcome external and internal threats (objective and subjective), comprehensive strategies must be developed. Much more so when facing the threat of the invading army requires effective coordination between the armed forces and civilian institutions, ensuring a unified and efficient response from all levels of government, as Jensen and Hoffman (2024) assume. Internally, combating corruption requires strict control and auditing policies, along with severe penalties for those who violate these rules. The promotion of an ethical culture within the public service is the condition of possibility to mitigate this social problem.

Fifth, the lack of human resources (human talent) and financial resources can be addressed through strategic alliances with international organizations and foreign partners willing to provide financial and technical support, to strengthen national sovereignty. Consequently, establishing clear priorities in the use of limited resources will ensure that the most critical needs are met first, a mission for which the theory of rational choice, typical of the economic conception of democracy (Downs, 1973), can be very useful. Similarly, fostering an environment conducive to foreign investment can help stabilize the economy and provide additional funds for administrative development.

To conclude, from the general framework of these reflections, four concrete actions emerge, in the form of recommendations, that may be of some practical or theoretical use: 1) Strengthen citizen participation mechanisms to ensure that public policies truly reflect the needs of the people; 2) Implement digital technologies to improve administrative efficiency; 3) Develop international alliances to secure financial and technical resources and; 4) Promote an ethical culture within the public service to effectively combat corruption. These recommendations, among others, can guide both future researchers and policymakers in their efforts to improve public administration in crisis contexts.

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