

## The transition from a "weak state" to a "powerful state": Ukrainian case

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### ABSTRACT

In the authors' previous studies of the state phenomenon with the status of "weak state" and signs of this type of political system, Ukraine was considered a vivid example of a state of this type. However, since the beginning of Russian military intervention in Ukraine on February 24, 2022, we have witnessed the rapid transition of the Ukrainian state and political system from weak state status to a powerful one. In this study, the authors consider differences in the definitions of "powerful" and "strong" states and prove that Ukraine, having left the ranks of weak states, has not yet acquired the status of a strong state, but has the signs of a powerful one. It is also noted that the conditions and terms of such a transit of the state and political system are unique. In the authors' opinion, three main requisites of the fast transit of Ukraine to the status of a powerful state have been substantiated: the presence of a strong political leader and a particular mentality of the Ukrainian people. The research by Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter with their idea of the resocialization of citizens, i.e., adoption and assimilation of new democratic values, norms, and behavior models by the population of the state as an essential factor in obtaining durability and democracy by the state, served as the methodological basis for choosing these categorical characteristics. Furthermore, the role of the "aggressive neighbor" factor in acquiring a new status by a political agent has also been substantiated.

### KEYWORDS

*Ukraine,  
war,  
Russian aggression,  
powerful state,  
transit,  
political transit,  
political leader,  
identity*

### Introduction

The phenomenon of weak states has long been the subject of research by specialists worldwide. For example, in 2004, R. Rotberg defined the principles of dividing states into strong, weak, and collapsed ones (Rotberg R., 2004). In addition, many studies are devoted to the post-Soviet transfer of countries, particularly the search for ways to quickly and effectively transition these countries from authoritarian rule to democracy (Y. Schherbak, 2009; A. Mashura, 2015; H Kassab., 2015, etc.).

The main indications for a state to belong to the weak one are loss of physical control over the territory; loss of the right (monopoly) of the state to the legitimate use of force; the inability of the authorities to make collective decisions; increasing levels of corruption and organized crime; inability to collect taxes; large-scale movements of large masses of refugees and demographic crises; environmental disasters (remember Chornobyl); invasion from the outside (Zelinska, Chechel, 2019).

To fall within the category of a weak state, of course, only a few of the attributes mentioned above are sufficient.

Let it be noted that the listed negative processes are more natural and controllable but still sometimes unpredictable and dangerous for ordinary citizens and the surrounding environment.

In this research, an attempt is made to reveal discrepancies in the definitions and categories of "strong" and "powerful" states, as well as to analyze the preconditions and ways of overcoming the weak state status, particularly in the course of transit in the political, economic and security sector.

However, the uniqueness of the Ukrainian version of the transit of the state and political system from weak to powerful allows an analysis of the main factors that conditioned this transit, defining the differences in the definitions of a strong and a powerful state to be pioneering.

### Research methods

Traditional social theories (in particular, realism and liberalism) do not explain much about the issue in question since their scope of interest does not include explaining the principles of the weak state and the rules and conditions of its existence in a world where democracy prevails at all. The problem of the "scientific gap" can also



be observed in the so-called "hybrid paradigm" of democratization, namely in the studies of Larry Diamond (2002), Andreas Schedler (1998, 91-107), Steven Levy Cillier and Steven Levitsky (1995), Thomas Karozers, Jean Gruegel (2002) and others. For example, J. Gruegel (2002: 68-91) only mentions the possible dependence between the nature of state power and the establishment of the democratic regime in the state as one of many aspects of the democratization process (Zelinska, 2017: 165). The main methods of scientific cognition that are used in the research are systemic ("powerful" state is considered as a separate state and political system with its features of formation and functioning), structural and functional (the Ukrainian version of the political transit to powerful state is studied as a specific structural form with separate functions which interacts with other institutions and state formations), comparative (to identify significant features in different political systems and their institutions, analysis of definitions of a weak state, powerful state, and strong state), socio-cultural method (transit and functioning of the powerful state became possible due to the phenomenon of Ukrainian identity restoration).

A crucial methodological basis for substantiation of the conditions of Ukraine's rapid transition to the status of a powerful state was the idea of American political scientists Philippe Schmitter and Guillermo O'Donnell concerning the resocialization of citizens, i.e., democracy, which they developed in their work *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (1986) devoted to the study of the democratization process.

### Results

The research paper is one of the first in the domestic science studies of the special Ukrainian transit from a weak state to a powerful state.

In this context, the leading scientific findings are formulated, which are characterized by novelty and reveal the logic and the basic concept of the article:

- Clarification of the difference in the definitions of "powerful" and "strong" state;
- Conditions of the state's transition from the status of a weak state to a powerful one;
- Peculiarities of Ukrainian political transferring in the conditions of Russian aggression in 2022.

### Discussion

To begin the discussion of this research, it is reasonable first to remind what weak states are, their peculiarities, and what is necessary for states with such status to function effectively.

According to R. Rotberg (2004), the possibility or impossibility, efficiency, or inefficiency of providing three groups of political benefits to citizens by the state is the basis for classifying states into strong, weak, "failed," and "collapsed."

Weak states constitute a wide range. They are:

- 1) naturally weak because of physical and geographic location or unfavorable environmental and economic situations and resource constraints;
- 2) initially strong but showing weakness at a certain stage of their functioning due to bad management, despotism, internal contradictions, or external attack;
- 3) mixed-type states, combining the characteristics of the two above.

Modern scholars assess weak state autonomies by their ability to pursue state goals, such as security and

development, in order to survive. Because they have little capacity, weak states are assumed to have little autonomy and cannot achieve much on their own. A weak state is either subordinate to another power or internal forces within the state, like a feudal state with a powerless king.

It would be worth noting the authors' view on the problem of the existence of weak states by Barry Buzan (1991), who believed that the essence of any state is a combination of three main components that form a triangle, namely the institutional expression of the state (bureaucracy) - administrative, legal and legislative authorities, coercive powers. This indicator also includes the norms and procedures by which public administration is carried out. It is necessary to mention that the model does not pay much attention to whether the institutions are democratic or not.

The second component of the triangle is the idea (spirit) of the state (the nation). This idea binds people together in sociopolitical unity and answers the question of how the state is organized and the reasons why it exists. The indicator is related to such terms as nationality and ideology, especially powerful in nation-states.

And the third component is the physical basis for the existence of the state (territory) - because a state consists of people, a certain territory, and natural resources within state borders.

That is, the conclusion is that if one of the components of this conditional triangle is absent or weak in its functional nature, the state leans towards weakness and loses its power.

Regarding the definitions of powerful state and strong state and the differences between them, one can refer to the Cambridge Dictionary. Thus, a powerful state is a state that has the potential for strength, a particular influence on the subjects of foreign policy, and plays a significant role in the international arena. At the same time, a strong state is an entity impervious to destruction, both external and internal, and can pursue complex policies without regard to opposing stakeholders. It is strong enough to have its foreign policy and not be subordinate to other states. Usually, this means sufficient defensive strength to deter attack by an aggressor.

For example, according to American political scientist and futurologist F. Fukuyama (2020), in the post-Cold War world, "weak" states or "losers" have become the most fundamental problem of international order. The term "weak" is a characteristic of a state's powerlessness, not its scale; it refers to a lack of administrative capacity for proper governance, the cause of which is the illegitimacy of the political system as a whole. It is in such states that human rights are violated and that they are the source of mass imitation and attacks on neighboring states. Moreover, September 11, 2001, proved that these states became a cover for international terrorism. Fukuyama says that since the fall of the Berlin Wall until September 11, most international crises have been associated with "weak" states or "losers." These include Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo, and East Timor. He also notes that the weakening of national statehood has been a common trend in global politics in recent decades. However, in the context of the global security crisis, the main issue of international politics is not the weakening of statehood but rather strengthening. Fukuyama stresses that for individual societies (as well as the world community as a whole), the destruction of statehood is "not a prelude to a utopia but disaster."

Weak states around the world, from Europe to South Asia, pose a threat to the international order, becoming hotbeds of conflict and severe human rights violations, acting as a potential source of a new breed of terrorism capable of infiltrating the developed world.

The scientist writes that while we do not wish to see the return to the world of large forces in conflict, we need strength. Only states are capable of uniting and reasonably deploying forces of order. These forces are necessary to ensure the rule of law domestically; therefore, those who advocate the "twilight of statehood" - whether free-market advocates or devotees of multilateral treaties - must explain what exactly replaces the power of sovereign states in the modern world of criminal syndicates, terrorist groups, etc., with particular power and legitimacy, but rarely both at once. Without a definite answer, we have no choice but to return to the sovereign nation-state and try again to understand how to make it strong and successful.

The author says he has had a certain problem translating a book in Russia. So, in 2004, he published a book called "State Building," translated into Russian as *The Strong State*. In his understanding, the researcher notes that a strong state is an effective state with respect for the law, an independent and fair judicial system, a well-developed infrastructure, and a well-functioning social services and health care system in his works.

The American Fund for Peace, founded in the mid-twentieth century, is the most professional in compiling the list of strong and weak states. As the basis of the Conflict Assessment System (CAST), the Fund examines 12 social, economic, political, and military indicators, assesses the ability of the five most important state institutions to ensure stability and security, and - which seems to be important - takes into account risk factors and unexpected (adverse) events which may affect the state status. In addition, much attention is paid to the vulnerability of the state and the risk of future domestic violence.

According to recent reports by The Fund for Peace (FFP, 2022), sixty or seventy of the 193 United Nations members are strong states. These are the nation states that top the rankings and include countries such as Finland, Norway, Iceland, Canada, essential regions of Europe, Brazil, and South Korea. The strong countries are followed by eighty or ninety weak states: some are almost strong, and some, at the bottom of the weak list, tend to fail and are capable of becoming a subtype, the so-called "failed states." They are weak because they do not supply as much or as little of an inadequate quantity of political goods and/or political goods of inferior quality. Then there are the collapsed states (often about twelve at a time around the world), which constitute separate categories.

Notably, according to the aforementioned, The Fund for Peace (FFP, 2019), in 2019, Ukraine belonged to the category of states with an increased level of danger and instability with an index of 71.0 (but with a tendency for the stability indicator to worsen: in 2019 it was 1.5 points (compared to the index of 2018). This is a kind of confirmation of Ukraine's weak state status. Although, based on the data from 2022, even though the state is at war with Russia, The Fund for Peace (FFP, 2022) classifies Ukraine as a state with a low level of instability with an index of 68.6, and this is already a positive sign of a particular strength of the state.

At this point, after the beginning of Russian aggression in Ukraine, Fukuyama (2022) foresees a victory for

Ukraine, recognizing the strengthening of its position in the international arena and the attainment of internal stability. This would seem impossible for other weak states, which to their internal weakness, are still at war with a major aggressive state. However, the scientist explains such a phenomenon as, before the war, Ukraine's greatest weakness was the dominance of the oligarchs in its economy and political system. The internal balance of power has changed dramatically since the invasion, with the oligarchs being the first to flee the country. Rinat Akhmetov, a Donbas oligarch whose former Party of Regions claimed to represent Russian-speaking interests in eastern Ukraine, witnessed his steel plant, Azovstal, bombed and occupied in a heroic last stand against the Russian occupiers. He predicts there will be an excellent opportunity to strengthen the Ukrainian national identity around a new set of symbols and power balances and to overcome the country's corrupt legacy that existed before February 24, 2022.

Fukuyama outlines several reasons for Ukraine's impending victory.

First, the U.S. and its NATO allies, responding to Volodymyr Zelenskyy's request for military assistance, are sending much more equipment to Ukraine, such as long-range artillery, drones, and aircraft, which will negate most of Russia's advantage in firepower. The researcher notes that while we do not know what Ukraine's losses have been to date, some suggest that Kyiv may now have parity in armored vehicles, depriving Moscow of the 3-1 advantage usually needed for a successful offensive.

Second, Russian morale is expected to remain extremely low. The units withdrawn from northern Ukraine were thrown back into the fight in Donbas before they had time to rest and regroup. To date, they have suffered considerable losses in human resources and equipment and apparently have lost several more generals lately. The Ukrainians are even more motivated to win now that they have witnessed the atrocities committed by the Russians in the occupied territories.

Hence, this leads us to the conclusion that the conditions for Ukraine's successful transit from weak-state status to powerful-state status are:

#### **1. The presence of a strong political leader.**

It happened that at a decisive moment in Ukraine's history, in the position of Supreme Commander-in-Chief, there was the man who, for an overwhelming part of his life, was a comedian. The *New York Times* wrote that Volodymyr Zelenskyy is playing a role that almost no one expected of him: that of wartime president of Ukraine.

Indeed, it seems that the central performance of his life came at a time when Russian troops were preparing to invade. His passionate attempt to appeal to the voice of reason, which he made in the early hours of February 24, hours before the Russian invasion, when he addressed the Russians in Russian, unfortunately, failed.

His dramatic speech and appearance at the Munich Security Conference held on the eve of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, where he warned European allies about "appeasing" Russia, gave Zelenskyy something he did not have even among his supporters - credibility.

Currently, President Zelenskyy faces the greatest crisis in his country's modern history and confronts President Putin. But it has made him, a former comedian and actor, a wartime leader around whom Ukrainians have rallied (*BBC, February 25, 2022*).

The President of Ukraine has been awarded the Winston Churchill Prize for leadership by the Winston Churchill International Society. In a live broadcast from the press center of the British Prime Minister's Office (London), Lawrence Geller, head of the International Society, noted that events and phenomena are taking place today that have not happened since Winston Churchill 80 years ago. He added that democracy in Europe is now threatened by tyranny, and this threat is stopped by leadership and heroism. Like Winston Churchill, President Zelenskyy shows that tyranny must not succeed and that people should have the right to choose their path and their own lives. According to him, Zelenskyy's commitment to the founding principles of democracy and firmness in defending his country helps Europe understand itself, and "his standing up for democracy inspires us all."

On his part, Boris Johnson noted that after Russia launched a full-scale war against Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy proved his leadership. He addressed the Ukrainian President emphasizing the latter knew when the Russians began to attack Kyiv, and he would be their target. Zelenskyy could have left Kyiv because the survival of the Ukrainian state then depended on its survival. But he chose to stay in Kyiv with the Ukrainian people, just as Churchill remained in London in 1940, saying, "I need weapons."

According to Boris Johnson, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, like Winston Churchill in his time, overcomes tough challenges and inspires by his leadership. The Prime Minister of Great Britain emphasized, "the Ukrainian people are a lion, and you should be their voice. A voice against tyranny, good against evil, light against darkness. And you perfectly showed the voice of a lion, and it is very important that you are the President at this time of crisis for Ukraine and the world. Inspired by your leadership, we know that Ukraine can not only win – it will win! And when that day comes, Ukraine will appear as a strong independent state" (*President of Ukraine. Official Website, 2022*).

The point is not just that Zelenskyy did not flee at the beginning of the Russian invasion, and the history of modern Ukraine has already seen fugitive presidents. Minister of Defense Oleksii Reznikov said in an interview that everyone expected the President to flee and form a government in exile. However, Zelenskyy had his scenario (*The Economist, 18.06.2022*).

Instead, we see an example of charismatic leadership based on the belief in the unique qualities and abilities of the leader, his exceptionality. Charismatic leadership arises in a society, as a rule, during crisis periods. The motive for the delegation of power to a charismatic leader is the awareness of the public at large, as well as a significant part of the ruling elite, of the inability of representative institutions available in the country to lead the country out of the crisis, to consolidate society around a particular goal of social development. This causes the need for a sharp increase in the influence of the executive branch and the search for a political leader as a messiah capable of leading the country out of a deep and protracted crisis (*Shlyakhtun, 2005*).

However, having the leadership qualities, persuasiveness, and persistence of President Zelenskyy, a team of his ministers and civil servants, who are exceptionally brilliant at doing their job during the war, must be considered. Furthermore, the previously unknown publicity of Russia's aggressive actions has been raised because of their joint actions. They motivated Europe to act and help

Ukraine by imposing sanctions against Russia and providing weapons to Ukraine.

## **2. The revival (or restoration) of Ukrainian identity through the unification of Ukrainian society in the fight against Russian aggression.**

Looking at the "condition" of Ukrainian society according to the key (in our opinion) periods for Ukraine, the whole period the Ukrainian society has signs of social uncertainty. Those periods are:

- the proclamation of the declaration of independence of Ukraine in 1991, but by 2004 the model of "Soviet Ukraine" - the principle of creating an effective counterbalance between the centers of socio-political and socio-economic was again in place;

- Orange Revolution - new opportunities for democratization of Ukrainian society, but by 2013 the country returned to the system of rigid clan governance;

- Revolution of Dignity in 2014, but Ukraine returned to the authoritarian majority in six years.

Ukrainian sociologists characterize the state of Ukrainian society as social transformation, social tension, crisis society, or "social matrix failure."

In other words, it can be assumed that members of Ukrainian society were not willing to concede personal achievements in order to form unifying social expectations and ensure the effective functioning of society. Namely, this is one of the critical components of civil society formation, uniting social actors who want a shared future within a particular country (*Yereskova et al., 2020*).

In Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter's *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (1986), dedicated to the study of democratization, the authors mention that the transition from authoritarianism to democracy is a process that has three main stages:

- regime liberalization;
- the democratization of the regime;
- resocialization of citizens.

The liberalization stage of the regime involves the construction of the so-called "guardian democracy," according to which the establishment of democratic freedoms takes place under the control ("guardianship") of the old, authoritarian apparatus of power (most often under an authoritarian military regime).

The democratization stage involves the institutionalization of democracy. As a result of "pacts" and "agreements," new political institutions are created to replace the authoritarian system of power, and democratic procedures (above all, competitive elections) and rules are introduced.

The resocialization stage involves the consolidation and assimilation by the country's population of the latest democratic values, norms, and behavior models. This stage can be called the final stage of the state's withdrawal from authoritarian rule. Ukraine and Ukrainian society have passed all stages, as can be seen. If divided into specific periods, the liberalization of the regime took place from 1991-2014, when Russian leaders determined the vector of Ukrainian statehood. The stage of democratization (2014-2022) conditionally occurred after the Orange Revolution, when the Ukrainian society stood up for the right of free political choice and continued in the struggle for the European vector of development during the Revolution of Dignity. The final stage for Ukrainian society is now in 2022. It is the stage of resocialization - understanding people and the country through the prism of the struggle against the aggressor, cohesion of society,

a clear vision of the state's future, self-identification of Ukrainian citizens as people living in the country, they are proud of, and that is respected all over the world.

The feeling and comprehension of the cultural and political history of the nation develop into an ideology of this nation as a unified and organic essence of its being, without which the meaning of life is lost. Subconscious and conscious patriotism, pride in the people's assets (losses are also assets of experience), and most importantly, the mobilization of efforts for their development, protection, and political organization of society form the foundation for the transformation of people into a nation. The worldview comprehension is systematized in the people's ideology (Pavliuk, 2003: 6).

In general, it is necessary to admit that the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukrainian territory was a catalyst for many cultural processes. There was an unprecedented increase in interest in the country's history, a widespread switch to the Ukrainian language, and a radical change in attitudes toward the Ukrainian identity. From the ashes of the war also arose art. There are many examples, like Taras Borovkov's song about a bayraktar. Writers, musicians, directors, designers, sculptors, artists, and illustrators looking for inspiration in the images of contemporary heroes, soldiers of the Ukrainian armed forces, and territorial defense, reflecting in their works the strength and courage of the people, their love for their land, their belief in victory and the searing pain of the tragedy. The question of Ukrainian identity was particularly acute when tanks entered the land to destroy it. One of the values is being fought over: the occupation troops are trying to destroy Ukrainian identity in the temporarily occupied territories. At the same time, millions of Ukrainians are changing their attitude toward what it means to be Ukrainian, and artists are no exception.

A Ukrainian singer Max Barskikh said in an interview with the American publication *The Rolling Stone* that he likes the fact that Ukraine is a big family today. He had changed his attitude about what it means to be Ukrainian. Max used to think that all Slavic people were alike. However, when he rigged deeper into history, he realized that Russia had always wanted to invade or destroy Ukraine.

Vyacheslav Cherniy, an expert on history, notices that derussification is, first of all, the end of the period of the post-colonial syndrome; it is the transformation of a people into a nation. The post-war culture will be a vivid variety of genres and directions, all the prerequisites for this are already in place. One cannot completely withdraw from the influence of Russian culture. However, it is necessary to neutralize all its negative impact, impose the inferiority complex, and use the general historical experience to continue the imperial policy (Yermolenko, 2022).

3. The last prerequisite for the successful transit of Ukraine to the status of a powerful state is quite paradoxical, **namely the presence of an aggressive neighbor**. This factor has already been pointed out in our past studies. Still, through the prism that such a hostile neighbor weakens the state, such a geopolitical position has its characteristics in the process of weak state development.

Interestingly, weak states can also be seen as a certain condition for the survival of the large neighboring state. If a weak state is located in a vital strategic space (be it geography, resource endowment, economic potential, territory, population, or competence), big states may act aggressively to gain control over the weak ones. Weak states in such circumstances will be forced to pur-

sue a balancing strategy: winning, negotiating, or, if they are lucky, remaining neutral to guarantee their survival.

Weak states can learn from their particular historical experiences and, therefore, continue the policy of neutrality to ensure their continued existence.

Other scholars of economics describe a passive policy as having a state in weak state status; this policy may include complex balancing (a military campaign or a worldwide alliance to counter the threat), soft balancing (diplomacy or economic management of the state to counter the threat), countering (ignoring the demands of the hegemonic state), blackmail (using threats to gain some concessions), slipping the leash (building up capabilities independent of the big states' proximity), binding (associating a great power with a weak power economically or through institutions) and gluing (developing a "special relationship" with great power) (Kassab, 2015: 105).

Back in 2009, five years prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, a prominent article on Ukraine appeared in the *American Foreign Affairs* issue (Karatnycky, Motyl, 2009). The authors believed that the deterioration of relations between Russia and Ukraine had to alarm the West significantly since Ukraine's security was critical to the stability of Europe. According to the authors, Ukraine was expected to return to the political agenda as a state that defended its rights rather than moving toward the status of Russia's vassal. The article characterizes Russia as an undemocratic, authoritarian, and self-righteous nationalist country. Its mass media have consistently created an image of a hostile, aggressive Ukraine - a thief of Russian gas - allied with the enemies of Moscow (how can one not recall the indicators of the degree of the hostility of Russian society toward Ukraine, when according to the Russian Public Opinion Research Center poll of February 15, 2009, every sixth Russian citizen was ready for war with Ukraine, and 70% of those polled considered an armed conflict with possible). That is how the views of former "brothers," who until recently signed up to love Ukraine, have been zombified. The blame for this lies entirely with the ruling regime of the neighboring state and is contrary to the interests of Russia and its people.

Yet, unexpectedly for the world and the Russian Federation itself, plans to "take Kyiv in 3 days" proved unrealizable. The war showed that Ukraine and Ukrainian society are stronger than anyone could have imagined. In an interview with CNN on the sidelines of the G7 summit, U.S. foreign policy chief A. Blinken said that strategically Putin had already been defeated in the war in Ukraine. He said not to confuse the tactical with the strategic. If one considers Putin's strategic goals, he has already been defeated. His strategic goal was to end Ukrainian sovereignty and independence, to wipe it [Ukraine] off the map, and annex it to Russia. Here they lost. And a sovereign and independent Ukraine will last longer than Putin. That was what Anthony Blinken told American journalist Jake Tapper.

Because of Ukraine's unexpected internal state strength, its strong leader and his team, the resilience and cohesion of Ukrainian society, and the support of international partners, it has not survived the difficult early days and times of Russian aggression. Still, it has made a stunning transit to the status of a solid state. Moreover, it is because of Russia's actions that Ukraine will move closer and closer to the European Union - the process of gaining E.U. candidate status is already underway. After

all, by his actions, Putin has launched the process of unifying the political nation, a process that Ukrainian society has been unable to achieve for centuries.

Moscow's strategic task will not change: it will continue to try to take over Ukraine. Russia will not be able to do this only in one case if it is weakened, and it will not have any time to care about the Ukrainians. On the other hand, what about the treaty? It will simply create opportunities for peace, which will be temporary. After all, one must understand that Russia is a constantly belligerent neighbor, a neighbor that does not see its future without the heart of the empire - Ukraine. Meanwhile, Ukraine's goal is to be the main artery of Europe (Demchenko, 2022).

"We should not entertain empty hopes that they (the Russians) will simply leave our land. We can only conquer the world," says Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

### Conclusions

Therefore, summarizing the results of the study, it is necessary to note:

1. The indicated difference in the definitions of a strong state and a powerful state consists mainly in the fact that the countries with the status of "strong" have a greater reserve of stability against destruction internally and through external influence. Moreover, they have a great potential for independence in decision-making and influence in the international arena. At the same time, "powerful states" are still to be considered in their international policy by other subjects of the political field, who need the support of international partners in case of both external aggression and internal destabilization. Thus, it is concluded that a "powerful state" is already a democratic and stable political system, which has moved away from the status of weak, but such a system often lacks economic and defense capabilities. Therefore, without the support of international partners, there is a danger of losing its strength.

2. The transitory path of states with "weak" status to more stable and enduring ones is possible and, as seen by Ukraine's example, rapid. The general conditions are: - reforming the political system, namely overcoming the tendency to create "decorative" democratic institutions and carrying out declarative reforms; - economic reformatting and strengthening the defense potential of the state, taking into account the resources of each region of the country; - choosing a particular neighborhood strategy with a big hostile state, namely the "slipping the leash" tactics.

3. The uniqueness of the Ukrainian political transit in 2022 lies in the fact that the state with the status of "weak" in the conditions of military aggression from the Russian Federation not only did not roll back to the status of a "dying state," as some theorists of political transferring predicted it but also managed to acquire a particular strength in this transformation process. Combining such factors as a strong leader and political leadership in the state and a cohesive civil society against the background of military aggression from a neighbor has become the Ukrainian formula for success. As a result, Ukraine, in a very short time (6 months), was able to get the status of "powerful state" (the increase of stability index in Ukraine was mentioned above), to gain authority in the international arena and subjectness in political processes, to unite its population through a certain national idea of "the Ukrainian dream of a peaceful and happy life."

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## Транзит від "weak state" до "powerful state": український варіант

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У попередніх авторських дослідженнях феномену держав зі статусом "weak state" та ознак такого типу політичної системи, Україна розглядалася як яскравий приклад держави з таким статусом. Але з початком російської агресії проти України 24 лютого 2022 року, ми стали свідками швидкісного транзиту української державно-політичної системи від статусу слабкої до статусу міцної держави. В цьому дослідженні автори розглядають відмінності в дефініціях "міцна" (powerful) та "сильна" (strong) держава, і доводять, що Україна все ж таки, покинувши лави слабких держав, ще не набула статусу сильної, але має ознаки міцної держави. Також зазначається, що умови та терміни такого транзиту державно-політичної системи є дійсно унікальними. Обґрунтовано три, на думку авторів, головні умови швидкісного транзиту України до статусу міцної держави: наявність міцного політичного лідера та особлива ментальність українського народу. Методологічною основою для виділення цих категоріальних ознак стали дослідження Гільєрмо О'Доннела та Філіпа Шміттєра з їх ідеєю щодо ресоціалізації громадян, тобто закріплення й засвоєння населенням держави нових демократичних цінностей, норм і моделей поведінки, як важливого фактора набуття державою міцності та демократичності. Обґрунтовано також роль фактора «агресивного сусіда» в набутті політичним суб'єктом нового статусу (третья ознака).

**Ключові слова:** Україна, війна, російська агресія, міцна держава, транзит, політичний транзит, політичний лідер, ідентичність.

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