

Social justice and market economy security under the pressure of humanitarian challenges

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This article explores the impact of security factors on the balance of justice within the market transformation of contemporary Ukrainian society. The author analyzes theoretical approaches to the category of "justice" as a fundamental criterion for economic system stability and identifies the key drivers of social inequality arising during reform processes. The study demonstrates that economic efficiency is inextricably linked to moral, ethical, and social norms, as the level of justice determines the degree of public trust in state institutions.

Furthermore, the research substantiates that market transformations frequently trigger social disproportions that threaten humanitarian security. The author contends that justice within a market system must encompass not only formal equality of opportunity but also the creation of conditions for human self-actualization and equitable access to resources and social goods. Conversely, corrupt practices and excessive wealth differentiation erode social capital and hinder national development. The article establishes a conceptual dependence between the level of social justice and the resilience of national security, arguing that amidst market reforms, justice serves not only as a moral category but as a strategic tool for minimizing socio-political and economic risks. Finally, the study proves the necessity of integrating humanitarian criteria into state regulatory policy to ensure a balance between economic expediency and the sustainable development of society.

KEYWORDS

*justice,
market
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crisis,
military aggression,
social inequality,
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humanitarian
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Introduction

In contemporary circumstances, marked by global economic transformations and the full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation, the issue of justice within market transformations has acquired critical significance. The war has intensified security challenges across socio-economic, ethical, and humanitarian dimensions, elevating the "social cost" of reforms to a strategic priority.

The transition from a command-and-control economy to a market-based system is accompanied by fundamental shifts in property structures and the hierarchy of wealth distribution. This process raises urgent questions: are the outcomes of these reforms beneficial to society as a whole? Is equality of opportunity being ensured? Or is the market becoming a source of new forms of humanitarian and social discrimination?

This issue is particularly acute due to growing wealth differentiation and unequal access to critical social goods - education, healthcare, and developmental resources. While market mechanisms aim to increase efficiency, they frequently exacerbate social polarization. This, in turn, undermines social cohesion, humanistic values, and public trust in state institutions. Amidst wartime challenges, the market economy must be viewed not merely as a production system but as a complex socio-humanitarian space. In this context, justice emerges not only as an ethical category but as a fundamental economic factor of stability. Economic security under such circumstances entails more than protecting finances; it serves as a guarantee of opportunities for human development, which remains the state's primary capital. Thus, seeking a balance between market

dynamics, social responsibility, and humanitarian priorities is a prerequisite for Ukraine's sustainable development and the mitigation of social tension.

The aim of this study is to provide a theoretical substantiation and analysis of the correlation between social justice and the resilience of a market economy under current humanitarian and security challenges (specifically military aggression and global transformations), as well as to define the role of the state in balancing economic efficiency with humanitarian priorities. To achieve this, the following objectives were established:

- To analyze the category of "justice" as a fundamental criterion for legitimizing market transformations within the modern socio-humanitarian space;
- To investigate the impact of military aggression and economic instability on the deepening of social polarization and wealth differentiation in Ukraine;
- To identify security risks arising from the imbalance between humanitarian values and market resource distribution mechanisms;
- To substantiate the role of social justice as a pre-emptive factor in preventing internal threats to national security and the erosion of trust in state institutions;
- To develop recommendations for integrating humanitarian criteria into state regulatory policy to build an inclusive model of a market economy.

Research methods

The logical framework of this inquiry is grounded in the established understanding of social process development. The methodological foundation of the study comprises a



synthesis of general scientific and specialized methods of cognitive inquiry into socio-economic processes, ensuring a comprehensive approach to analyzing justice and security as the fundamental pillars for overcoming crisis and ensuring sustainable market development. Through the application of the dialectical method, the categories of justice and security were examined in their interconnection and interdependence, as well as within their inherent dynamics and contradictions. This approach facilitated the identification of developmental patterns in market relations under the influence of social and humanitarian security factors, which ultimately determine the stability of the economic system.

Systemic analysis provided the capacity to view the market economy as an integrated socio-economic system, within which justice and security serve as interconnected elements of a sustainable development mechanism. This permitted the identification of structural links between the economic, social, legal, and institutional aspects of secure market functioning. Furthermore, a historical-logical approach was employed to analyze the evolution of scholarly thought regarding justice and security – moving from classical economic concepts to modern theories – thereby tracing the shift in emphasis from the maximization of economic gain toward the maintenance of social equilibrium and long-term resilience in economic and humanitarian policy.

Comparative analysis was utilized to contrast international and domestic experiences in the spheres of humanitarian protection, social justice, and economic security, which allowed for the identification of the most effective mechanisms for integrating principles of justice into state economic policy. The inductive approach was applied to generalize empirical data regarding manifestations of socio-economic injustice and threats to humanitarian security, while the deductive method was used to formulate theoretical conclusions and conceptual propositions regarding the necessity of harmonizing market efficiency with social responsibility across various spheres of public life. To enhance the validity of the findings, the study incorporated expert insights from specialists in economic policy, social justice, and humanitarian security, which served to refine the criteria for evaluating justice and security within the contemporary functioning of Ukraine's market economy.

Results and Discussion

The concept of justice has been scrutinized throughout the history of philosophical thought, from Plato and Aristotle to Kant, Marx, and Hegel. Within contemporary international legal philosophy (including the works of F. Hayek, R. Dahrendorf, and R. Nozick), the theory of John Rawls occupies a preeminent position. At the core of Rawlsian theory is the premise that the legitimacy of political power must derive solely from the voluntary consent of citizens. This is manifested as a social contract between the state and the people aimed at the harmonization of public interests. As stakeholders, citizens articulate and align these interests. The primary motivator for social justice should be the collective interest of citizens, which anticipates a growth in their share of benefits, thereby potentially reducing the aggregate utility gained from cooperation. The question of justice remains central to philosophy and political economy as it represents "equality of opportunity" – a system in which inequality is permissible only if it improves the condition of the least advantaged members of society (Rawls, 2001).

Contemporary researchers have played a fundamental role in conceptualizing the essence of justice and injustice within social processes. Notably, V. Horbatenko analyzes justice as both a value and an indicator of the development of legal and political systems, distinguishing between distributive, egalitarian, and retributive justice (Horbatenko, 2025). Furthermore, the study "Macroeconomic Equity: Addressing Income Inequality and Social Justice Through Economic Policy" (2023) examines economic inequality through the lenses of taxation policy, social insurance, and labor market participation. Similarly, while J. Hayfron et al. (2024) focus on healthcare, their methodological frameworks regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) remain highly relevant to the study of economic transformations.

The empirical research of B. Milanovic and D. Ersado, *Reform and Inequality during the Transition* (2010), warrants particular attention regarding the formation of social inequality. Analyzing data from 26 post-communist countries, the authors demonstrated that large-scale reforms – specifically privatization and infrastructural restructuring – facilitated income growth in the top deciles while negatively impacting the income share of the poorest segments of the population (World Bank Publications, 2006). This is echoed in a review by P. Bukowski and F. Novokmet (2024), which notes that the transition to market economies in Central and Eastern Europe led to intensified income inequality driven by technological change, globalization, and institutional shifts. Additionally, O. Ivashchenko (2018) illustrates that, across 24 transition economies, market liberalization and deindustrialization frequently acted as catalysts for rising injustice.

Empirical evidence confirms that market transformation is often accompanied by a deepening of injustice in the distribution of income, wealth, and humanitarian resources. This phenomenon is explained by the implementation of rapid reforms without adequate social safety nets. The privatization of major assets facilitated the emergence of new elites – the "winners" of the reform process – while leaving a significant portion of the population without humanitarian support. This has resulted in a societal cleavage between the "winners" and the "losers" (TSN.ua, 2024).

The uniqueness of the Ukrainian situation lies in the fact that its transformational period occurred against a backdrop of profound economic decline and high unemployment. The absence of robust governmental institutions further exacerbated social inequality. Amidst military aggression and the future de-occupation of territories, justice is being transformed from a purely economic category into a politico-moral one, particularly concerning resource distribution and reconstruction. Furthermore, Ukraine's development in the context of EU integration and transnationalization creates new parameters of justice that necessitate further academic inquiry. Ultimately, the public perception of justice directly influences the legitimacy of state authorities, the success of market transformations, and overall social resilience.

An investigation into the balance between justice and injustice during market transformations allows for a deeper understanding of market dynamics and identifies the factors essential for building a secure society. While market transformations are indispensable for Ukraine's economic dynamism and competitiveness, these processes – despite fostering private initiative and labor productivity – simultaneously generate new humanitarian challenges, the most acute being the problem of social justice.

In the context of reform, justice serves not only as a moral and ethical category but as a practical criterion for the effectiveness of state transformations. Inequitable income distribution, restricted access to resources, and intensified stratification constitute critical security risks capable of eroding trust in state institutions and stagnating social development. Conversely, ensuring social equilibrium and equality of opportunity serves as a guarantee for stable societal growth.

Today, Ukraine's national identity is being forged through resistance to the Russian Federation's aggression, which has become a powerful catalyst for societal consolidation. This unity helps illuminate the complex interplay between moral-ethical norms and regulatory-legal factors. At its core lie the value dimensions of justice, which form the foundation of both economic and humanitarian security.

The economic security of a state is defined by its capacity to ensure system resilience and self-development in the face of external threats. Its structural elements include financial, energy, food, and humanitarian security. The latter is intrinsically linked to justice: when social inequality reaches a critical threshold, the risks of internal conflict, corruption, and human capital flight increase. Consequently, justice acts as an internal stabilizer for national security.

The strategic objective of societal development must be humanitarian progress. According to the United Nations framework, the individual is both the primary resource and the ultimate goal of progress (UNDP, 2023). The Human Development Index (HDI), which integrates education levels, life expectancy, and well-being, serves as an effective indicator of humanitarian security. In the modern world, an economy lacking a humanitarian component loses its resilience, while humanitarian policy without an economic foundation loses its efficacy.

The value core of this system is justice. Through public administration and state regulatory policy, justice harmonizes societal needs with ethical values. One mechanism for such harmonization is the equitable "shareholding" of production and corresponding legislation regulating the distribution of benefits in core sectors (industry, energy, and agriculture). In this dimension, shareholders – citizens acting as full-scale subjects of market relations – become the "effective owners," reflecting successful models found in European and Asian countries.

The institution of the free market is central, yet it is not the sole instrument for shaping socially-oriented and justly regulated relations. Therefore, it is essential to identify the key laws of market functioning that have emerged during the development of a socially just society. It is worth noting a fact often obscured by proponents of classical (so-called "wild") capitalism: the market economy is neither a natural nor a universal phenomenon. It is a relatively recent social construct resulting from radical transformations within a specific culture. The market is frequently presented as an "automatic feedback mechanism," purportedly capable of self-regulation and influencing production and social policy through pricing and trade as an alternative to centralized planning.

At the early stages of establishing market relations, the trajectory of development varied significantly across different nations. Depending on the degree of libertarianism adopted, the outcomes of market transformations ranged from positive to acutely negative, affecting both economic performance and humanitarian

development (McConnell & Brue, 2003). Analyzing American history, A. Schlesinger emphasized that the Great Depression exposed the inability of the free market to overcome a large-scale crisis independently. This suggests that a market devoid of state regulation can guarantee neither justice nor stability. Consequently, social control and state regulatory policies are essential to bring order to societal and humanitarian processes (Schlesinger, 2003).

A. Karasevych and L. Shachkovska hold a similar view regarding the inherent injustice of an "unregulated market." They note that the Great Depression of the 1930s shattered the American public's faith in classical liberalism, as it became evident that unmanaged markets were incapable of ensuring prosperity or preventing mass impoverishment. In response, figures such as John Dewey, John Maynard Keynes, and Franklin D. Roosevelt advocated for strengthening the state apparatus as a security factor which, while remaining a bastion of individual liberty, would protect the population from the flaws of capitalism (Karasevych, Shachkovska, 2016).

Market transformations in post-socialist countries, particularly Ukraine, resulted in profound economic and humanitarian crises. K. Ilchenko compares this state to the Great Depression in the United States, likening the country's condition to that of a "terminally ill patient" (Ilchenko, 2020). An unregulated market leads to severe cuts in social spending and labor compensation, a reduction in capital investment, and the degradation of administrative structures. Such practices are dangerous, as they prioritize the maximization of shareholder profits – who often extract funds from companies without reinvesting them in development.

To ensure the secure functioning of enterprises, it is necessary to involve a broad base of minority shareholders. This democratizes the production process and strengthens its public-governance component, built upon the principles of justice. Such approaches to state regulatory policy are successfully applied in modern enterprises in China, Japan, and Europe (Roienko, 2012). The experiences of countries like Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Finland, and Norway confirm that the state's role in minimizing crisis processes through the representation of humanistic values is decisive (Kaspruk, 2006). The legal and regulatory frameworks in these nations are grounded in universal values that directly influence the economic, political, and humanitarian spheres (Shved, 2007).

Analyzing the humanitarian component of the market economy and the role of public administration, K. Ilchenko notes that a narrative was persistently imposed suggesting that any state intervention in market functions is harmful and reduces efficiency. In Ukraine, over the past forty years, the active implementation of "free market" policies has led to the mass privatization of state enterprises and financial institutions, radical deregulation of the industrial and financial sectors, and a reduction in social expenditures (Ilchenko, 2020). However, in practice, the world has faced profound injustices that have generated a series of humanitarian, political, and financial security challenges. Specifically, practices such as mass layoffs and labor relations without guarantees have become widespread; workers are deprived of the right to unionize while working hours steadily increase. Furthermore, the manipulative lowering of procurement prices leads to the bankruptcy of small service companies, while income remains concentrated within a narrow circle of individuals.

An orientation toward the maximization of short-term shareholder profits has resulted in a diminished interest in the long-term strategic development of companies. The current system of "limited humanitarian responsibility" allows businesses to evade obligations toward society, the state, and their own employees (Ilchenko, 2025). This mirrors the perspective of the American economist John Kenneth Galbraith, who contended that the maximization of shareholder value is an irreversible process driven by large-scale capital. To establish a "countervailing power," he proposed strengthening state regulation and implementing rigorous control through labor unions (Galbraith, 1952).

Consequently, the concentration of shareholder value in few hands has proven hazardous to both corporate stability and national humanitarian policy. Numerous countries have concluded that the "free market" has, in practice, manifested as an uncontrolled, spontaneous process aimed at rapid enrichment via the reduction of public income and the curtailment of social programs.

Guided by the principles of justice, the governments of not only European nations (such as Sweden, Germany, and Switzerland) but also China and India have opted for only partial liberalization. While adopting a capitalist model and preserving private property rights, these states have maintained their role as regulators in matters of labor compensation and production cost control. As a result, the state has acquired the status of a "stable shareholder" in large corporations by holding a majority stake.

The mechanism of justice in these countries is realized through clear labor standards: a return to regulated working hours and the expansion of workers' rights. Social programs play a pivotal role in elevating the standard of living. In Ukraine, unfortunately, the dominance of the oligarchy and the disregard for humanitarian justice have prioritized the demands of the ruling class. The combination of an entirely unregulated market with criminalized methods of governance hampers Ukraine's economic development and exacerbates domestic crises (Ilchenko, 2025).

Further negative influence is exerted by the policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which impose outdated 18th-century market concepts on post-socialist countries. This approach is based on the flawed premise that a market emerges automatically through the abolition of price controls and total privatization. Such a view ignores the principles of modern capitalism practiced in developed nations. As experts from the "Agenda" group (notably V. Mahaletska) point out, the market is not a mystical "invisible hand" but a social institution that must be shaped by conscious human effort, grounded in the principles of social justice and national humanitarian priorities (Mahaletska, 2019).

An analysis of Ukraine's socio-economic dynamics demonstrates a complex trajectory in overcoming the consequences of the systemic crisis of the 1990s and the new threats posed by military aggression. At the beginning of the 21st century, researchers noted a critical decline: having lost over 75% of its economic potential during the years of transformation, Ukraine fell below 100th place in global rankings. The social cost of reforms was exceptionally high, with up to 82% of the population living below the poverty line (Pavlovskiy, 2001), accompanied by a catastrophic drop in life expectancy and a demographic crisis.

This period fostered a "philosophy of lost opportunities," wherein external debt dependency and the degradation of

high-tech industries caused the state to effectively lose its agency in developing its own growth programs. While leading nations – such as China – were establishing new industries, Ukraine's core sectors of mechanical engineering and electronics faced the brink of extinction.

Despite gradual economic recovery in subsequent decades, the principles of social justice were never fully implemented, leaving society vulnerable to new shocks. In 2024, as a result of the full-scale war with the Russian Federation, poverty levels have again reached critical – though lower than in the 1990s – benchmarks. According to World Bank estimates (2024), approximately 29% of the population (9 million people) currently live below the poverty line. While this figure suggests a significantly higher resilience of modern market institutions compared to the collapse of the 1990s, it nonetheless signifies a humanitarian catastrophe. The primary drivers have been mass unemployment (with over 20% of the workforce losing jobs) and inflation, which once again brings the issues of state trust and the justice of resource distribution during the recovery period to the forefront.

Today, social inequality is no longer merely an economic issue but a direct threat to humanitarian security – a vital component of national security. This security framework encompasses:

- Educational security: the quality and accessibility of knowledge;
- Cultural security: the preservation of national identity and language;
- Information security: the resilience against propaganda and manipulation;
- Socio-humanitarian security: the continuous development of human capital.

The strategic challenge for contemporary Ukraine lies not only in physical reconstruction but also in the regeneration of a humanitarian infrastructure that has suffered colossal losses. In this context, justice and humanitarian security serve not merely as ethical ideals but as the very foundation of market economy resilience. We propose a core set of recommendations for a new humanitarian standard, which seeks to integrate the values of democracy and patriotism with an equitable distribution of resources.

1. Overcoming wartime destruction and facilitating social reintegration. There is an urgent need to restore spiritual unity and the cultural landscape, which necessitates the rehabilitation of affected populations and the systematic integration of veterans into civilian life. During periods of crisis, state welfare payments must function as more than a means of survival; they must serve as a stabilizer of the social contract, preventing the critical impoverishment and marginalization of millions of citizens (World Bank, 2024).

2. The techno-ethical transition and digital security. Simultaneously, Ukraine faces the challenges of the *Fourth Industrial Revolution*, characterized by the implementation of Artificial Intelligence and biotechnology. Modern digital networks create a new ethical dimension where privacy concerns and data manipulation emerge as national security threats. Under these conditions, humanitarian development must be grounded in an ethics of responsibility that protects individuals from technological alienation and epistemic violence.

3. Formulation of a national humanitarian strategy. For sustainable progress, humanitarian policy must be transformed from a reactive model (responding to crises)

into a long-term strategic one. This strategy should be based on three key priorities: **(a)** Investment in human capital: prioritizing the funding of education, innovation, and science as the primary drivers of competitiveness; **(b)** Informational resilience: strengthening humanitarian security by countering disinformation and supporting independent media; **(c)** Civic agency: empowering communities to participate in humanitarian decision-making through international partnership mechanisms.

Conclusions

The research conducted leads to the conclusion that market transformations in Ukraine – despite their significant potential for increasing economic efficiency – have historically been accompanied by profound social disproportions and humanitarian challenges. An analysis of the transition from the collapse of the 1990s to contemporary wartime realities demonstrates that social justice is not merely a moral ideal but a fundamental security factor that determines the legitimacy of market institutions and the resilience of the state.

1. Justice within a market system is found to encompass more than the formal equality of opportunity; it requires the creation of tangible conditions for human self-actualization, fair labor compensation, and access to strategic social goods. Conversely, excessive wealth polarization and corrupt practices undermine social capital, creating critical risks of conflict, emigration, and the loss of human potential. In this sense, justice serves as a preemptive instrument for ensuring both humanitarian and economic security.

2. To overcome chronic instability, a balance must be established between economic expediency and social responsibility. This necessitates an active public regulatory policy aimed at improving the market's institutional framework, ensuring capital transparency, and fostering a culture of corporate responsibility. The state must act as a "stable shareholder" in humanitarian development, ensuring the transformation of the market from a mere resource-accumulation mechanism into a tool for human support.

3. The study establishes a deep interdependence between the market economy and the humanitarian sphere: a developed culture and education system form the human capital necessary for an efficient market, while the market generates the resources required to fund these sectors. Ukraine's post-war reconstruction must transcend simple economic recovery to become a value-driven, humanistic transformation. The strategic task is to create a model where the individual – along with their dignity and rights – remains the central axis of state strategy.

Only by combining state support, the activity of civil society, and the ethical responsibility of every actor in market relations can Ukraine build a resilient, just, and secure model of societal development capable of withstanding contemporary global and military threats.

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Соціальна справедливість та безпека ринкової економіки в умовах гуманітарних викликів

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У статті досліджено вплив безпекових факторів на баланс справедливості в процесі ринкової трансформації сучасного українського суспільства. Проаналізовано теоретичні підходи до категорії «справедливість» як фундаментального критерію стабільності економічної системи. Виявлено ключові чинники соціальної нерівності, що виникають в умовах реформування. Доведено, що ефективність економіки нерозривно пов'язана з морально-етичними та соціальними нормами, оскільки рівень справедливості визначає ступінь суспільної довіри до державних інституцій. Обґрунтовано, що ринкові перетворення часто провокують соціальні диспропорції, які загрожують гуманітарній безпеці. Автором визначено, що справедливість у ринковій системі має охоплювати не лише формальну рівність можливостей, а й створення умов для самореалізації людини, доступу до ресурсів та соціальних благ. Натомість корупційні практики та надмірна майнова диференціація руйнують соціальний капітал і гальмують розвиток країни. Визначено концептуальну залежність між рівнем соціальної справедливості та стійкістю національної безпеки. Обґрунтовано, що в умовах ринкових реформ справедливість виступає не лише моральною категорією, а й стратегічним інструментом мінімізації соціально-політичних та економічних ризиків. Доведено необхідність інтеграції гуманітарних критеріїв у державну регуляторну політику для забезпечення балансу між економічною доцільністю та сталим розвитком суспільства.

Ключові слова: справедливість, ринкові перетворення, криза, військова агресія, соціальна нерівність, державне регулювання, гуманітарний розвиток, гуманітарна безпека.

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