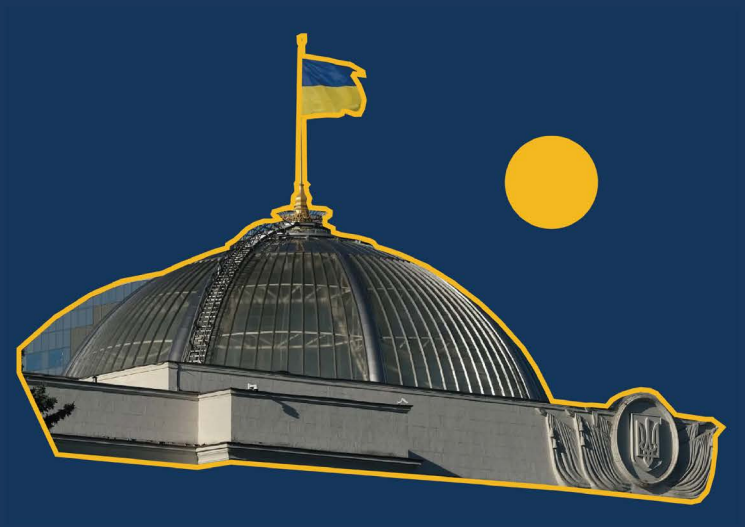
7 • 1 • 2025



BALANCING COERCION AND EXTORTION: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN UKRAINIAN STATEHOOD

MYKHAILO MINAKOV

NAD
Nuovi Autoritarismi e Democrazie:
Diritto, Istituzioni, Società

NAD Nuovi Autoritarismi e Democrazie: Diritto, Istituzioni, Società

doi: 10.54103/2612-6672/28780 ISSN 2612-6672 – Anno 2025 – vol. 7 (n. 1)

Saggi

BALANCING COERCION AND EXTORTION: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN UKRAINIAN STATEHOOD

Bilanciare coercizione ed estorsione: cambiamento e continuità nello Stato ucraino

Mykhailo Minakov *

ORCID: 0000-0002-0619-7321

Abstract

[Eng.] This paper examines the evolution of Ukrainian statehood from 1917 to 2025, focusing on both the continuity and changes in its characteristics. It employs normative and historicist approaches to analyze the state's development across three distinct phases: the First Republic (1917-1922), the Second Republic (1922-1991), and the Third Republic (since 1991). The study demonstrates that while certain aspects of Ukrainian statehood, such as population and territory, have remained relatively stable, others have undergone significant changes, particularly in governance, sovereignty, and international relations. The research supports and challenges Charles Tilly's hypothesis linking war-making and state-building, emphasizing the complex interplay between coercion, extraction, and state-building in the context of Ukraine.

Keywords: Ukrainian Statehood – State-Building – Coercion – Extraction – Post-Soviet Transformation – Normative vs. Historicist Approaches – War-Making

[It.] La presente ricerca esamina l'evoluzione dello Stato ucraino dal 1917 al 2025, concentrandosi sia sulla continuità che sui cambiamenti delle sue caratteristiche. Utilizza approcci normativi e storicistici per analizzare lo sviluppo dello Stato in tre fasi distinte: la Prima Repubblica (1917-1922), la Seconda Repubblica (1922-1991) e la Terza Repubblica (dal 1991). Lo studio dimostra che, mentre alcuni aspetti dello Stato ucraino, come la popolazione e il territorio, sono rimasti relativamente stabili, altri hanno subito cambiamenti significativi, in particolare nella governance, nella sovranità e nelle relazioni internazionali. La ricerca sostiene e sfida l'ipotesi di Charles Tilly che collega la war-making e la costruzione dello Stato, sottolineando la complessa interazione tra coercizione, estrazione e costruzione dello Stato nel contesto dell'Ucraina.

Parole chiave: Statualità ucraina – State-building – Coercizione – Estrazione – Trasformazione post-sovietica – Approcci normativi e storicisti – War-making

* Dr. Habil. in Philosophy, DAAD Guest Professor at European University Viadrina (https://ror.org/02msan859); Editor-in-Chief, The Ideology and Politics Journal. The essay was submitted to double blind peer-review. Member of the Editorial Staff who oversaw the essay: Edoardo Maria Landoni.

Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International

© The Author(s)

Published online: 06/05/2025

Milano University Press

Contents: 1. Introduction. 2. What's in the State: Methodological Deliberations. 3. The Phases of the Ukrainian Statehood's Evolution. 3.1 The First Republic. 3.2 The Second Republic. 3.3 The Third Republic. 4. Analysis and Conclusions.

1. INTRODUCTION

The state presents significant challenges for scholarly examination. On the one hand, our everyday experiences offer ample evidence of its manifestation in both individual and collective behaviors, as well as in the common rhythm of various social, economic, and legal institutions. On the other hand, it remains a political phenomenon that defies definitions. Moreover, this entity has undergone substantial transformations throughout history, evolving from the political structures of ancient civilizations such as Egypt, China, and Punjab to modern diverse constructs exemplified by the Federal Republic of Germany, the People's Republic of China, and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Scholarly inquiry into the inception and evolution of relatively new nations can help political scholars better understand what a state is. In this regard, an investigation into Ukrainian statehood may provide political science with a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon and serve as a means to evaluate contemporary theories of state formation. Given that Ukraine has undergone state-building processes during periods of peaceful stability, revolutions, and wars, it presents a case in which various models of state-making can be structurally compared.

In this paper, I address one question: which characteristics of Ukrainian statehood endured the historical transformations between 1917 and 2025, and which were forsaken? Responding to this question would enable me to evaluate Charles Tilly's strong hypothesis that the evolution of the contemporary state is profoundly interconnected with the imperative of war-making and the accumulation of resources to sustain warfare[1].

This paper is organized according to the aforementioned objectives. First, I examine one of the fundamental concerns in contemporary discussions of the state: the contention between normative and historicist methodologies regarding state conceptualization. Second, I review the phases of the evolution of Ukrainian statehood. Ultimately, I conclude with observations on the variable and stable components of Ukrainian statehood from a *longue durée* perspective.

2. WHAT'S IN THE STATE: METHODOLOGICAL DELIBERATIONS

The state is a debated concept in contemporary political and legal studies and political philosophy. In these fields, the state is multifaceted and involves elements of governance, sovereignty, legal

[1] C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990*, Blackwell, 1990.

identity, class power apparatus, the nation's political structure, a political community, and numerous additional aspects[2].

In relation to our scope of the study, scholars who adopted normativist and historicist approaches to analysis viewed the state differently. The normativist perspective on the state emphasizes its role as a guarantor of law, rights, and the normative order of society. This broader theoretical approach highlights that the state's primary functions are to uphold legal norms and ensure justice, acting as a framework for resolving conflicts and maintaining social cohesion through the rule of law[3]. This viewpoint was influenced by the ideas of Hans Kelsen, a prominent normativist. He depicted the state as a legal order—a system of norms intended to regulate human behavior and ensure compliance through enforceable laws. For Kelsen, the essence of the state lies in its legal character rather than in physical or coercive aspects. The state's legitimacy stems from its ability to organize and enforce a normative legal system, which guarantees the stability and predictability of societal interactions[4]. Today, this approach highlights that the primary functions of the state are to uphold legal norms and ensure justice, providing a framework for resolving disputes and maintaining social unity through the rule of law[5].

When adhering to the normativist approach, scholars from diverse "ideological camps", theoretical schools, and disciplines concur that the state is not merely a coercive apparatus but rather an institutional manifestation of collective values and ethical principles. Its functions extend beyond governance and enforcement to encompass fostering a sense of shared purpose and identity within society[6].

This perspective has been practically implemented through the statehood criteria of the Montevideo Convention (1933) and its relevance in the post-WWII realities[7]. In a nutshell, the Convention outlines four formal criteria for statehood: a permanent population, a defined territory, an organized government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states. These criteria underscore the state's legal personality, its ability to fulfill the normativist (and collective moral) expectations, and its role as a sovereign entity within the international system[8].

Despite its conceptual—and moral—strength, this approach to the state requires further empirical reevaluation. The normativist perspective often overlooks distinctions between contemporary and historical states, as well as their varied forms (regular, irregular, sporadic, etc.), political and legal systems, traditions of statehood, and practices of jurisprudence and coercion, among other factors[9]. These dis-

[2] See approaches to the definition of state in: W. C. Opello, S. J. Rosow, *The nation-state and global order: A historical introduction to contemporary politics*, Lynne Rienner, 1999; W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2002; A. Hehir, N. Robinson, *State-building. Theory and Practice,* Routledge, 2007; M. Zamboni, *Law and politics: a dilemma for contemporary legal theory*, Springer Science, 2007; D. Held, *Political theory and the modern state*, John Wiley & Sons, 2013; M. Carnoy, *The state and political theory*, Princeton University Press, 2014.

[3] N. Kildal, S. Kuhnle, *Normative foundations of the welfare state*, Routledge, 2007, 12-18.

[4] See: H. Kelsen, *General theory of law and state*, Routledge, 2017 [1945]; H. Kelsen, *The legal status of Germany according to the Declaration of Berlin*, in *American Journal of International Law*, No. 39(3), 1945.

[5] On this argument see: N. Kildal, S. Kuhnle, *Normative foundations*, cit., 12-18.

[6] W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, cit.; T. Parsons, *Social theory: Twenty introductory lectures*, Cambridge University Press, 2009; S. Buckler, *Hannah Arendt and political theory: Challenging the tradition*, Edinburgh University Press, 2011; M. Carnoy, *The state and political theory*, cit.

[7] *Montevideo Convention on the rights and duties of states*, on *Oslo University Database of International Acts*, 1933, https://www.jus.uio.no/english/services/library/treaties/01/1-02/rights-duties-states.html. On the influence of normativist approach on the Montevideo Convention, see N. Kildal, S. Kuhnle, *Normative foundations*, cit., 18-33.

[8] It should be noted, though, that the convention was not universally accepted and was criticized for being too focused on the Western statehood experience. E.g., see: T. D. Grant, *Defining statehood: The Montevideo Convention and its discontents*, in *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law,* No 37, 1998.

[9] These normativist limitations were acknowledged and partially remedied by David Held when he endeavored to amalgamate normative and historical comparative methodologies in his critical theory of state and globalization. See D. Held, *Models of Democracy*, Polity Press, 2006; D. Held, *Political theory,* cit.).

tinctions in political experiences and institutions inform the realist, comparative, and historical inquiries into the state, all of which share a historicist perspective.

Charles Tilly is widely recognized for using a historical-sociological approach in his investigations of the state through the lens of its (or, more accurately, their) genesis and real politics and coercion. This approach combines historical documentation, comparative analysis across cases, and an emphasis on processes over time, focusing on how social and political structures evolve through conflict, negotiation, and power struggles. His methodology was articulated in *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990*[10], in which Tilly examined how interactions between war-making, capital accumulation, and state-building took place across diverse historical contexts.

Influenced by Tilly's and related studies in political sociology and the history of the state, the historicist perspective today concentrates on social relations, emphasizing how interactions among groups (e.g., states, elites, and citizens) shape institutions and outcomes. It also examines critical events and processes, such as wars and revolutions, that influence the structures and functions of states over time. Additionally, this perspective aims to identify recurring mechanisms (e.g., coercion, extraction) and processes (e.g., war-making, state-making) that explain patterns in state formation[11]. Tilly defined coercion and extraction as central processes in the formation and consolidation of states, where coercion is the use of force or the threat of force by the state to achieve compliance, maintain order, and secure its territorial and political objectives, while extraction is the political coercive process by which states obtain resources from their populations to finance state functions, especially war-making[12].

In the methodological and essential conflict between the normativist and historicist perspectives, there are three significant outcomes for researchers studying state and political history. First, this contestation illustrates how elusive the state is as an object of study. Second, it demonstrates that in pragmatic research, a scholar must consider both approaches, following the aforementioned example of David Held (see footnote 9). Third, the critical model of state research should incorporate at least some normative elements alongside the wealth of historical data, providing scholars with a chance for a realist view of the state.

In light of these arguments, I have developed a model that allows me to explore the case of Ukrainian statehood, where stable and variable elements mutually reinforce each other. Drawing on existing research about the emergence and development of the Ukrainian state from a longue durée perspective[13], I have formulated the research model presented in Table 1.

[10] C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, cit.

[11] On that issue, see: C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, cit.; J. Mahoney, D. Rueschemeyer, (eds.), *Comparative historical analysis in the social sciences*, Cambridge University Press, 2003; A. Hehir, N. Robinson, *State-building*, cit.

[12] C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, cit.

[13] This long-term perspective is reflected in the following studies used in this research: V. Fritz, *State-building: A comparative study of Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, and Russia*, CEU Press, 2007; S. Yekelchyk, *Ukraine: Birth of a modern nation*, Oxford University Press, 2007; O. Subtelny, *Ukraine: A history*, University of Toronto Press, 2009; P. R. Magocsi, *A history of Ukraine: The land and its peoples*, University of Toronto Press, 2010; S. Plokhy, *The gates of Europe: A history of Ukraine*, Basic Books, 2017; M. Minakov, *Un siècle de système politique ukrainien: L'expérience de construction d'un État en Europe orientale aux XX e et XXI e siècles (traduit par Eric Aunoble)*, in *Connexe,* No 8, 2022.

ISSN 2612-6672 – n. 1/2025

Table 1. Analytical matrix of Ukrainian statehood's stability and variability (1917-2025)

Criteria Period	Normative elements	Historical elements	Status of the element
Fist Ukrainian Republic (1917-1922)	permanent population defined territory organized government capacity to enter into IR	established government formed elites formalized citizenship relations to war- and peace-time coercion	stable/variable
Second Ukrainian Republic (1922-1991)	permanent population defined territory organized government capacity to enter into IR	established government formed elites formalized citizenship relations to war- and peace-time coercion	stable/variable
Third Ukrainian Republic (since 1991)	permanent population defined territory organized government capacity to enter into IR	established government formed elites formalized citizenship relations to war- and peace-time coercion	stable/variable

3. THE PHASES OF THE UKRAINIAN STATEHOOD'S EVOLUTION

In the paper *A Century of the Ukrainian Political System: The Experience of State-building in Eastern Europe in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries*[14], the author provided a comprehensive analysis of the iterations—the so-called "republics"—through which the Ukrainian state has evolved. In this historical study, Minakov argued that the Ukrainian state underwent three phases (or republics), each distinguished by unique normative and institutional achievements. In this section of my paper, I will summarize the findings from his study, as well as from the long-term studies mentioned in footnote 13, while reviewing them from both normative and historical perspectives.

3.1. *The First Republic*

The First Republic (1917-1922) was shaped by numerous political and military conflicts stemming from World War I's "Eastern Front" and the disintegration of the Russian Empire in 1917, as well as the Austro-Hungarian and German Empires in 1918. During this period in present-day Ukraine, various political projects competed with one another, including the monarchist White Movement, the Bolshevik World Revolution, the Anarchist Makhnovian Republic, and the Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR). In Ukrainian national history, the latter is highlighted as the project that invigorated Ukrainian statehood.

This highlight, however, is questionable. The UPR was a significant and enduring political project, yet it required constitutive power. Initially, it was organized around the Central Council (CC, *Tsentral'na Rada*)[15] in Kyiv, whose authority was granted by the Temporary Government in Petrograd. When the Bolsheviks dissolved the Temporary Government in October/November 1917 and dismissed the Constituent Assembly in January 1918, the CC lost its formal legitimacy but retained its power in Kyiv. It

[14] M. Minakov, *Un siècle de système politique ukrainien,* cit.

[15] The Central Council (Tsentral'na Rada) was initially an association of Kyiv-based activists and intellectuals supporting revolution in Petrograd and promoting its case in Ukrainian lands.

expanded its authority and controlled territories due to the support of loyal military units and the partial obedience of some local communities[16].

From 1918 to 1922, the Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR) was governed by the CC, and then by Hetman Skoropadsky, whose supporters held some monarchist views regarding Ukrainian statehood. Skoropadsky rose to power through a coup against the Rada and received German military support for the purpose of efficient 'extraction.' Later, it came under the leadership of the Directory (*Direktoria*), led by Symon Petliura. The UPR aimed to establish its formal legitimacy and tangible control over its territories while seeking both internal and external sources of legitimacy. Due to ongoing military developments, the UPR was unable to hold elections; however, several congresses of soldiers and peasants were convened to create at least a semblance of the social and democratic foundation of its authority. Additionally, they conducted several successful military campaigns against other competing factions within the country and regarded military victories as a significant source of legitimacy[17]. Ultimately, the UPR sought external legitimacy, including recognition from the Entente states, Central Powers, and a re-emergent Poland[18]. Nevertheless, the disintegration of the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires, along with the successes of the Red Army and Polish forces in Ukrainian territories, undermined and ultimately ended the existence of the UPR project.

From a normativist viewpoint, the First Republic has ambiguously defined the UPR territory and population. This definition, however, was quite contentious. The CC's four foundational acts (*universaly*) of 1917-1918 addressed various regions where they could operate[19]. As socialists and nationalists, the UPR founding figures primarily focused on the Ukrainophone peasantry and combatants while overlooking other ethnolinguistic and social groups in Ukraine. The rapidly evolving military context did not allow for stable civil governance in the territories declared to belong to the UPR. The UPR central administration only had a few months of civil governors, and for several years, it was led by military leaders. Although somewhat hesitantly, the UPR was seen by some Western states as a potential contender for national statehood; however, other Western powers expressed sympathy toward alternative claims to statehood, including those of the White imperial and Polish projects[20]. By the end of the UPR project, the populace of Ukraine had developed a collective sense of purpose and identity, a reality that the Bolshevik administration found impossible to disregard.

From the historicist perspective, the wartime situation between 1917 and 1922 offered distinct factions of local elites opportunities to pursue their political projects in Ukraine. In their competition, the Bolsheviks demonstrated superior capabilities in managing coercive mechanisms, which ultimately led to their victory by the end of 1922. During the First Republic, elite factions tended

[16] S. Yekelchyk, *The Ukrainian Meanings of 1918 and 1919*, in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, No. 36(1/2), 2019.

[17] B. Dmytryshyn, *The German Overthrow of the Central Rada, April, 1918*, in *Nationalities Papers*, No. 23(4), 1995; S. Yekelchyk, *The Ukrainian Meanings*, cit.

[18] V. Holovchenko, *Obtaining International Sovereignty of the UPR at the Central Rada Period*, in *Historia i Polityka*, No. 27(20), 2017; O. Razyhrayev, *Ukraine and the Ukrainian Question in 1914-1923*, in *Trimarium*, No. 1(1), 2023.

[19] V. Holovchenko, *Obtaining International Sovereignty*, cit.

[20] S. Degtyarev, V. Zavhorodnia, L. Polyakova, *Ukraine–the Entente Relations in 1917–1918: The Choice not Taken*, in *Terra Sebus. Acta Musei Sabesiensis*, No. 11, 2019; M. Bojcun, *The first treaty of Brest Litovsk*, in M. Bojcun, *The Workers' Movement and the National Question in Ukraine: 1897-1918,* Brill, 2021.

to rely on military coercion, which, after all, was the primary source of success on the battlefield. Although formalized Ukrainian citizenship did not exist during this time, a sense of a specific national destiny began to emerge amid a prolonged period of extreme violence and devastation.

The summary of this period is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Ukrainian statehood during the First Republic

Normative elements	Historical elements	Additional elements
no permanent population or defined territory competing, irregular governments unstable capacity to enter into IR	competing, irregular governments unstable elites no formalized citizenship short-living civil governors, 2 years of military leadership	by 1922, the population embraced a collective sense of purpose and identity that the Bolshevik administration could not disregard

3.2. *The Second Republic*

The Second Republic (1922-1991) marked a phase during which Ukrainian statehood made significant advancements in normativist and historicist contexts compared to the earlier era. However, the formation of the Ukrainian state was gradual and developed as part of a broader political framework. During this time, Ukraine was recognized as a separate republic that co-founded the USSR alongside the Belarusian, Russian, and Transcaucasian Soviet Republics in 1922. The demographic makeup of the Ukrainian SSR was influenced by multiple waves of Ukrainianization (*korenizatsia*) and Russification, leading to the emergence of a distinct bilingual Soviet national identity (as understood in Soviet terms), alongside the growing prominence of Soviet super-ethnic identity[21]. The Ukrainian SS Republic had its own branch of the Communist Party, a distinct republican administrative apparatus (separate from the Union and Russian structures), and informal elite groups (some of which were involved in all-Union political dynamics)[22].

The demographic landscape of the Ukrainian SSR was profoundly influenced by numerous rapid historical changes driven by ongoing class conflict and Stalin's repressions (which explicitly targeted Ukrainian intellectuals), forced industrialization, the Holodomor, three years of total warfare during World War II that led to widespread destruction of most settlements and infrastructure, and the subsequent reconstruction, urbanization, and modernization efforts. By the end of the 1980s, over 66% of the fifty-million Ukrainian population resided in urban areas (approximately 20% in 1917), with at least six metropolitan areas exceeding a million inhabitants[23]. Industrialization positioned Ukraine as arguably the most advanced Soviet republic[24].

During that timeframe, Ukrainian territory steadily expanded. Since 1954, it has included the Crimean Peninsula (which from 1922 to 1953 was part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) and

[21] O. Filippova, *Politics of identity through school primers: The discursive construction of the legitimate image of state, nation, and society in Soviet and independent Ukraine*, in *Anthropology of East Europe Review,* No. 27(1), 2009; P. R. Magocsi, *A history of Ukraine*, cit.

[22] P. R. Magocsi, *A history of Ukraine*, cit.; M. Minakov, *Republic of clans: The evolution of the Ukrainian political system*, in B. Magyar, (Ed.), *Stubborn structures: Reconceptualizing post-communist regimes*, Central European University Press, 2019.

[23] *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision*, on *UN Institute of Peace Press,* 2018.

[24] J. Corbet, A. Gummich, *The Soviet Union at the crossroads: Facts and figures on the Soviet republics*, Deutsche Bank, 1990.

Western Ukraine (which remained under Polish governance from 1918 until 1939). Ukrainian borders with Soviet Russia, Belarus, and Moldova were established as internal administrative demarcations within the USSR. Ukraine also shared state borders with Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland[25].

In this territory, during the Second Republic, the Ukrainian population increased from approximately 26 million in 1922 to around 52 million in 1990, despite severe human losses in the Holodomor and World War II. It was educated through the Soviet Ukrainian educational system, which integrated both all-Union and republican specificities (different systems of exams, education in two languages, Ukrainian and Russian, own textbooks, some differences in administration, etc.)[26]. This resulted in a population with a flexible identity, enabling them to support the Soviet Union's unity in the referendum of March 1991 and Ukraine's independence in December of the same year[27].

Like the rest of the Soviet Union, Ukraine was governed by a dual structure. Formally, the state was managed by the system of Soviets, from the Supreme Council of the Union and the Ukrainian SSR (which included both legislative and executive elements) to the Council of Ministers (both Union and Ukraine) down to oblast, rayon, settlement, and local councils. In both formal and informal contexts, the decisive role in governance rested with the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU), under the oversight of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU). The CPU was a subdivision of the CPSU, with the First Secretary serving as the most influential figure in the republic. Real political competition primarily centered on the struggle among informal clans for control of positions within the CPU Central Committee, the Ukrainian SSR Council of Ministers, and the Supreme Council; some Ukrainian clans also engaged in controlling positions within the Soviet Union's governing bodies[28].

During the Second Republic, Ukraine had its own Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), which was an essential component of the Ukrainian SSR administration. Established in 1944, this ministry emerged after a constitutional change in the Soviet Union that permitted certain Soviet republics to create their own foreign affairs ministries. This development allowed Ukraine to participate in various international organizations, including the newly established United Nations, as a founding member[29]. However, the Ukrainian SSR MFA mainly managed diplomatic responsibilities within the limits of the centralized Soviet foreign policy dictated by Moscow. It had restricted autonomy and primarily concentrated on international cultural and academic exchanges, as well as representation at the UN and other interna-

[25] F. Hirsch, *Toward an empire of nations: Border-making and the formation of Soviet national identities*, in *The Russian Review*, No. 59(2), 2000.

[26] See data in: *World Urbanization Prospects*, cit.; M. D. Pauly, *Breaking the tongue: Language, education, and power in Soviet Ukraine, 1923-1934*, University of Toronto Press, 2014; W. Hellwig, J. Lipenkowa, *Ukraine*, in W. Hörner, H. Döbert, L. R. Reuter, B. Von Kopp, (Eds.), *The education systems of Europe*, Springer Netherlands, 2007.

[27] R. Szporluk, *Russia, Ukraine, and the breakup of the Soviet Union*, Hoover Press, 2020, 33, 56.

[28] Z. Sochor, *From liberalization to post-Communism: The role of the Communist Party in Ukraine*, in *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, No. 21(1), 1996; M. Minakov, *Republic of clans,* cit.

[29] Along with 50 other countries that signed the UN Charter, Ukraine became one of the co-founding members of the United Nations in 1945, participating under its formal name at that time—the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Ukraine's position is particularly noteworthy because it became a founding UN member alongside the Soviet Union itself, rather than simply being represented through it. In fact, Ukraine and the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic were the only Soviet republics granted separate membership in the organization alongside the USSR. This arrangement, agreed upon with the USA, effectively provided the Soviet Union with additional representation in the newly formed international body, strategically enhancing its influence in global governance structures. For more, see: J. E. Krasno, *Founding the United Nations: An Evolutionary Process*. In Krasno, J. E. (Ed.). *The United Nations: Confronting the Challenges of a Global Society*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004, 19-45; T. Kuzio, *Ukraine and the United Nations*, in *Journal of International Relations and Development*, No. 18(3), 2015.

tional organizations[30]. Nonetheless, this framework played a vital role in developing a comprehensive diplomatic service when Ukraine achieved independence in 1991.

The Second Republic became a regular state (unlike during the First Republic) with all the structures necessary to govern the territory that, after 1991, was recognized by all its neighbors as Ukrainian. Its population possessed a distinct Soviet Ukrainian identity, and the Ukrainian elites controlled it; at the same time, both the population and the elites were part of larger Soviet social and political structures and shared relevant political identities. Ukraine's sovereignty was limited by the USSR's statehood, and it did not have separate citizenship.

As an integral component of the Soviet Union, Ukraine's state-making unfolded in various stages characterized by extreme forms of coercion and extraction. This extreme extraction resulted in millions of fatalities during the Holodomor, for instance. The initial Ukrainization and later Russification initiatives were coercive strategies intended to assimilate the culturally diverse Ukrainian population. The dual political structure has also provided virtually no space for political freedom. Soviet governance represented a prolonged form of extreme coercion, marked by a significant element of militarism even in peacetime, whether stemming from class conflict (in the Bolshevik and Stalinist interpretative frameworks) or Cold War dynamics.

The summary of this period is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Ukrainian statehood during the Second Republic

Normative elements	Historical elements	Additional elements
permanent population defined territory organized government (under USSR supervision) limited capacity to enter into IR	established government (under USSR supervision) formed elites (also connected with the USSR elite networks) no formalized citizenship state-building connected with the preparations to war; super-coercion/extraction of Stalin's rule and WWII; strong coercion and extraction until mid-1980s	formed sentiment of a particular national destiny began to emerge six industrial metropolitan areas exceeding 1 million inhabitants by 1990, more than 66% of the fifty-million Ukrainian populace resided in urban areas (approximately 20% in 1917) minimal space for political liberty

3.3. *The Third Republic*

The Third Republic was established as a state-building collective effort during peaceful times. Unlike several other post-Soviet countries (e.g. Georgia and Moldova), Ukraine avoided military conflicts during and shortly after the dissolution of the USSR. The leaders of the CPU became the leaders of the independent state, replacing the conservative Ukrainian version of Soviet communism with a national democratic ideology. By embracing West-modeled democratization and marketization, the Ukrainian state has significantly reduced coercive and extractive forms of governance[31]. This led not only to an increase in political liberties but also to a criminal revolution, the rise of oligarchy, and

[30] A. Motyl, *The foreign relations of the Ukrainian SSR*, in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, No 6(1), 1982; R. Szporluk, *Russia, Ukraine, and the breakup of the Soviet Union*, Hoover Press, 2020.

[31] R. Szporluk, *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup*, cit.; M. Minakov, *The End of a Great Era: Post-Soviet Ttransformation in a Historical Perspective*, in *Nuovi Autoritarismi e Democrazie: Diritto, Istituzioni, Società (NAD-DIS)*, No. 5(1), 2023.

systemic corruption in the 1990s, along with two revolutionary changes of government (the maidans of 2004 and 2013-2014)[32].

Despite some secessionist attempts in the early 1990s, the Ukrainian territory remained unchanged since the post-1954 period (at least until 2014)[33]. The Ukrainian population also stayed largely the same as in the post-WWII era. However, it began a long-term decline: in 1990, it was around 52 million; by 2001, it had dropped to 46 million, and according to a very optimistic assessment[34], in 2021, it was 41 million. The mass outmigration following the Russian invasion in 2022 reduced the population to below 34 million[35].

The Ukrainian government underwent a lengthy construction process that included multiple waves of reforms aimed at separating branches of power, establishing the rule of law, ensuring efficient public administration, and promoting local self-governance. Despite influences from both Russia and the West, the Third Republic remained a fully sovereign state and a legitimate member of the global interstate system[36]. Despite the Russian aggression, Ukraine has been offered the prospect of EU membership in 2023[37].

The Third Republic inherited the dual state structure from Soviet Ukraine but reinvented it as a patronal democracy[38]. Behind the democratic façade, there was a growing multi-pyramid system of personalist, patronal networks that redistributed wealth and power among big and small oligarchic clans and informal groups. These networks, at times, managed to subdue the official governmental agencies to the interests of the patrons, thus challenging the state's sovereignty.

Numerous normativist and historicist elements of Ukrainian statehood have undergone profound transformations since 2014. During this period, the Ukrainian state faced numerous challenges, including a swift alteration of governance in a manner that was not defined by the Constitution, Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, and the start of the Donbas war with Russian and Russia-aligned separatist forces. This conflict escalated in 2022 into a major Russian invasion of Ukraine and the illegal annexation of four more Ukrainian regions[39]. Throughout this time, Ukraine's sovereignty was compromised, its

[32] See S. Kudelia, G. Kasianov, *Ukraine's Political Development after Independence*, in M. Minakov, G. Kasianov, M. Rojansky, (Eds.). *From "The Ukraine" to Ukraine. A Contemporary History, 1991-2021*, Ibidem Press, 2021; M. Minakov, M. Rojansky, *Democracy in Ukraine*, in M. Minakov, G. Kasianov, M. Rojansky, (Eds.). *From "the Ukraine" to Ukraine. A Contemporary History, 1991-2021*, Ibidem Press, 2021.

[33] The Ukrainian Supreme Soviet officially granted Crimea the status of an autonomous republic on February 12, 1991, with further legal recognition in August 1991. This autonomy within the unitary state of Ukraine was part of Ukraine's broader transition to independence from the Soviet Union, which was formally declared on August 24, 1991. For details, see G. Sasse, *Conflict-prevention in a transition state: The Crimean issue in post-Soviet Ukraine*, in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, No. 8(2), 2002; M. Minakov, G. Sasse, D. Isachenko (Eds.), *Post-Soviet Secessionism. Nation-Building and State-Failure after Communism*, Ibidem Press, 2021.

[34] Despite advancements in many other areas, the Ukrainian government was unable to organize a census in the 21st century, resulting in Ukraine being a rare case with significantly uncertain demographic statistics.

[35] *Statistics and Data: Population of Ukraine – 1900/2022*, 2024, https://statisticsanddata.org.

[36] K. Pishchikova, *What Ukraine teaches*, cit.

[37] K. Wolczuk, *Ukraine's bombed way to EU Membership*, in *Journal of International Affairs*, No. 75(2), 2023.

[38] See M. Minakov, *Republic of clans*, cit.; B. Madlovics, B. Magyar, *Ukrainian Regime Cycles and the Russian Invasion*, in B. Madlovics, B. Magyar, (Eds.), *Ukraine's Patronal Democracy and the Russian Invasion: The Russia-Ukraine War, Volume One*, Central European University Press, 2023.

[39] On the process of Russian illegal annexation of Ukrainian territories see: M. Minakov, *Post-Soviet sovereignty and Ukraine's political development*, in *Ukraine Analytica*, No 2(24), 2021; M. Minakov, *War, De-Oligarchization, and the Possibility of Anti-Patronal Transformation in Ukraine*, in B. Madlovics, B. Magyar, (Eds.), *Ukraine's Patronal Democracy and the Russian Invasion,* Central European University Press, 2023; P. H. Davies, *Counterintelligence and Escalation from Hybrid to Total War in the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict 2014–2024*, in *Intelligence and National Security*, No 39(3), 2024; T. Malyarenko, B. Kormych, *New wild fields: How the Russian War Leads to the Demodernization of Ukraine's Occupied Territories*, in *Nationalities Papers*, No. 52(3), 2024.

population significantly decreased to below 34 million, and its territory was reduced by approximately 20 percent[40].

Only a limited number of oligarchic clans and patronal networks survived after the Euromaidan of 2014. Nevertheless, shortly after this revolutionary transformation, these entities consolidated their power under President-oligarch Poroshenko[41]. The conditions of conflict enabled the government to enhance the use of coercion, establish an ideological monopoly, limit political pluralism, and intensify efforts to integrate into the EU and NATO[42]. Concurrently, the Zelensky administration effectively developed anti-oligarchic legal and political mechanisms that reduced oligarchic influence and curtailed the patronal networks outside the presidential administration[43]. The role of military elites began to increase, while civil authorities lost their influence. Amid prolonged warfare, Ukraine's government, population, territory, elites, and geopolitical stature have changed to such an extent that it raises questions about its continued existence as the Third Republic[44]. There is a possibility that Ukrainian statehood may be reorganized as the Fourth Republic, with the growing normative influence of the EU and within Western security frameworks.

The summary of this period is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Ukrainian statehood during the Third Republic

Normative elements	Historical elements	Additional elements
permanent population (until 2014) defined territory (contested since 2014) organized, regular government (short interruption in 2014) full capacity to enter into IR	established government formed elites formalized citizenship 20 years of peaceful period with strong institutionalization of government (minimal coercion, decreased strong extraction) over 10 years of war-making, growing efficiency of security-related institutions, uneven decline in civil administration; specific extraction	strong political liberty and constitution in peacetimes patronal political networks as domestic challengers of normative structures constant to harsh demographic decline

4. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The above data can be summarized for the analysis from normativist and historicist perspectives as presented in Table 5.

[40] E. Libanova, *Ukraine's Demography in the Second Year of the Full-Fledged War*, in *Focus Ukraine*, 2023, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/ukraines-demography-second-year-full-fledged-war; E. Libanova, O. Pozniak, *War-driven wave of Ukrainian emigration to Europe*, in *Statistics in Transition new series*, No. 24(1), 2023.

[41] M. Minakov, *A Decisive Turn? Risks for Ukrainian Democracy After the Euromaidan*, in *Carnegie Regional Insight*, 2016, https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2016/02/a-decisive-turn-risks-for-ukrainian-democracy-after-the-euromaidan?lang=en.

[42] M. Minakov, M. Rojansky, *Democracy in Ukraine*, cit.; M. Minakov, *War, De-Oligarchization,* cit.

[43] *Ibidem*.

[44] P. D'Anieri, *Establishing Ukraine's Fourth Republic: Reform After Revolution*, in H. E. Hale, R. W. Orttung, (Eds.), *Beyond the Euromaidan: Comparative Perspectives on Advancing Reform in Ukraine*, Stanford University Press, 2016*:*

Table 5. Distribution of data based on the analytical matrix of the stability and variability of Ukrainian statehood (1917-2025)

Criteria	Status of the element
Normativist elements	
permanent population	1917-1991 stable growth with two declines 1992-2025 stable decline (sharp decline in 2022)
defined territory	1922-1954 stable growth 1954-2014 stable since 2014 decrease
organized government	1917-1922 sporadic, multiple 1922-2025 stable regular government (despite crises in 1941/44, 1991, 2014)
capacity to enter into IR	1918-1991 sporadic/partial since 1991 stable
Historicist elements	
established government	1918-1922 sporadic/multiple 1922-1991 partial since 1991 stable (despite crisis in 2014)
formed elites	disruptions in 1922, 1941/44 stable power elites in 1945-2025
formalized citizenship	stable since 1991/1992
relations to war- and peace-time coercion	war-time violence: 1917-1922, 1939, 1941/44, since 2014 totalitarian coercion and extraction: 1920s-1950s authoritarian coercion and extraction: 1960s-1980s minimal coercion and extraction: 1990s normal neoliberal coercion and extraction: 1998-2022

The aforementioned data and arguments illustrate that from a normativist standpoint, the Ukrainian State has consistently maintained its population on, for the most part, defined and uncontested territory. Since 1922, Ukraine has been a regular state with an expanding capability to engage in international relations. Concurrently, the quantitative metrics of the population have fluctuated significantly from approximately 26 million in 1920 to 52 million in 1991 and to below 34 million in 2025. Furthermore, its governance sovereignty has evolved from intermittent under the First Republic to regular under the Second Republic to fully independent and sovereign since 1992. So, there was an equilibrium of stability and change in the Ukrainian statehood.

From a historicist perspective, the Ukrainian State developed under both wartime and peacetime conditions. However, its elites, along with the dominant Russian/Soviet elites (and, at times, Western elites), mainly used radical measures of coercion to control the population. This coercion was tied to

ISSN 2612-6672 – n. 1/2025

military logic even in times of peace. Only during a brief period of Ukrainian statehood—between 1991 and 2014—did its leaders reduce the level of coercion, while extortion was carried out through informal patronal networks. In this context, one can observe a relatively stable application of militarized coercion for gradual but consistent state-building.

This means that Ukraine's case paradoxically correlates with Tilly's hypothesis of associating war-making with state formation. On the one hand, it demonstrates that the Ukrainian elites frequently employed extreme forms of coercion against their population, whether during wartime or periods of peace. On the other hand, it can be contended that the zenith of the state's efficacy, population, and territory that Ukraine experienced occurred during peacetime with minimal application of coercion.