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REGIONAL FACTOR IN THE RESTORATION OF UKRAINE'S SECURITY SPACE: A CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL STUDY

Introduction. Under conditions of war, initiating comprehensive measures to restore Ukraine's security space is both difficult and risky. However, postponing such efforts until the end of hostilities also entails significant risks associated with the loss of valuable time. The concept of Ukraine's reconstruction is aimed at creating a national security environment while restoring the European security space as an area of freedom, dignity, and justice.

Problem Statement. Insufficient consideration of the regional factor as a conceptual "meso-level" of stabilization of socio-cultural systems within Ukraine's reconstruction process may adversely affect the effectiveness of post-war recovery.

Purpose. The study aims to determine the essence of the regional factor as a systemological and structural-functional foundation for enhancing the effectiveness of post-war reconstruction processes.

Materials and Methods. The research applies geocultural approaches that interpret regional culture as the basis for shaping the country's spatial identity while accounting for its geographical, linguistic, cultural, and religious characteristics.

Results. The analysis has confirmed the effectiveness of the "meso-level" concept as a methodological framework for developing strategies for the restoration of Ukraine's post-war security space. The findings have demonstrated that the regional environment serves as a fundamental element in preserving cultural diversity and represents an effective form of social organization during the reconstruction process.

Conclusions. Ukraine's integration into the pan-European security space requires recognition of the strategic role of the regional security factor in national development and highlights the urgent need to for-

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ulate a modern concept of regional policy. The development of spatial strategies for Ukraine's post-war territorial organization and analytical paradigms of spatial interaction is possible only through the application of innovative scientific and methodological standards of European regional studies. Security regional studies, as an interdisciplinary field of knowledge, requires institutionalization and integration into priority areas of R&D, technological, and innovation policy.

Keywords: meso-level, regional studies, spatial development, regional security, restoration of the security environment.

The development of conceptual strategies for the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine has become a prominent area of contemporary social sciences and humanities discourse [1—5]. It is evident that the effectiveness of these strategies largely depends on their systemic coherence, practical feasibility, and financial sustainability. The systemic nature of Ukraine's reconstruction concepts is grounded in an integrated approach to addressing post-war challenges, encompassing recovery planning, economic development, and regional security. An innovative systemic approach, supported by a solid scientific foundation, should become the principal mechanism for establishing a sustainable post-crisis environment characterized by an adequate level of infrastructural, social, and cultural development. Accordingly, the development and implementation of systems-based paradigms aimed at preserving and rebuilding Ukraine under conditions of war and post-war challenges should be regarded as a priority direction of Ukrainian social sciences and humanities research.

Any field of scientific inquiry requires a clearly defined framework of internal organization. Only such an approach makes it possible to establish a sound scientific foundation for the architecture of research and to understand the logic of interactions among its constituent elements. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that the terms *systems science* and *systematics* are rarely employed in contemporary social sciences and humanities research. At the same time, systems science, as an interdisciplinary field of knowledge, offers broad opportunities for investigating the general principles and regularities governing the functioning of systems of different types, including technical, biological, social, and cultural systems. It considers objects as integrated complexes of interrelated ele-

ments, synthesizes diverse methodological and conceptual approaches into a unified analytical framework, and is strongly oriented toward practical applications.

The effectiveness of systems-science methodologies depends on both the holistic treatment of the research problem and the appropriate selection of the *unit of analysis*. Such a unit should simultaneously capture the integral characteristics of the object under investigation and provide a basis for understanding its internal structure and long-term patterns of development. The selection of an appropriate unit of analysis is particularly challenging in interdisciplinary fields of knowledge, whose defining characteristic is the integration of approaches from multiple disciplines to develop innovative methods for addressing complex problems. One notable exception is regional studies, a multidisciplinary field that examines regions from geographical, historical, economic, political, and sociocultural perspectives. In this context, the choice of the unit of analysis is self-evident, since the region naturally serves as the principal theoretical and methodological reference point and as the conceptual *meso-level* linking the macro (global) and micro (local) dimensions of sociocultural systems. Such an approach makes it possible to examine interactions and interdependencies that cannot be adequately understood solely at either the global or the local level.

The growing recognition of the synergistic potential of the *meso-level* concept as an analytical tool for investigating issues arising at the intersection of global processes and local experience has determined the objective of this study. The study focuses on examining the regional factor as the systems-based and structural-functional foundation for enhancing the effectiveness of post-war

reconstruction within the broader context of shaping the pan-European security environment. This research has been conducted within the framework of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine's budget-funded research program *Preservation and Restoration of Ukraine's Social Sciences and Humanities under Conditions of War and Post-War Challenges*, which supports priority areas of scholarly research (Program KPKVK 6541230) for the period 2025—2026.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

Under conditions of war, initiating a comprehensive program for the restoration of Ukraine's security space is both extremely difficult and inherently risky. However, postponing such efforts until the end of hostilities is equally risky, as it results in the loss of valuable time. The concept of Ukraine's reconstruction is aimed not only at establishing a national security environment but also at restoring the European security space as an area of freedom, dignity, and justice. This process is multidimensional and comprehensive, encompassing immediate measures to address the consequences of military aggression, long-term plans for regional development and modernization, and the design of European models of regional policy for Ukraine. It is evident that restoring the security space will be a long-term undertaking requiring close coordination among the central government, regional and local authorities, civil society, and international partners [6]. The success of reconstruction initiatives is directly associated with the development of innovative Ukrainian scientific concepts and the adoption of European approaches aimed at restoring infrastructure, revitalizing the economy and the social sphere, and addressing the specific needs of individual regions [7].

Regional-spatial dynamics represent the continuous formation, transformation, distribution, and redistribution of spaces that are meaningful to different communities and individuals. During periods of conflict and war, these dynamics be-

come exceptionally complex and constitute one of humanity's greatest sources of concern. Under conditions of prolonged military confrontation, the need to develop a concept of strategic spatial thinking becomes particularly acute, as does the need to answer the question posed by the Anglo-American geographer D. Harvey, "*How do distinct human practices create and make use of different conceptualizations of space?*" [8]. Without applying the contemporary *spatial perspective* offered by regional studies as a methodological framework reflecting the implications of the *spatial turn* in the social sciences and humanities, answering this question is hardly possible.

A comparable *turn toward space* has also become evident within globalization discourse, which has stimulated research into the sociocultural interactions between global society and local and regional communities. Spatiality has emerged as one of the key parameters for developing innovative methodological approaches that recognize that analyses of social relations lacking a spatial perspective may produce a distorted understanding of reality. Contemporary scholarship has increasingly focused on interpreting the spatially situated worldview and defining the place of individuals within it [9—15]. Growing interest in the regional contours of cultural spaces has contributed to a deeper understanding of the dynamics and governing principles of the unified global chronotope, as well as to the conceptualization of the structural parameters and networked dimensions of *glocal space*.

Postmodern developments in the theory and methodology of spatial research have led to the rejection of the paradigm of one-dimensional linear progress and to a growing recognition of the cyclical nature of civilizational development, characterized by the periodic relocation of regional *centers of power* and a renewed understanding of the role of the regional factor in historical processes. Models of integrated European development have largely been founded on the principles of the *new regionalism*, which seeks to transform problematic dimensions of regional development

into an effective *space of opportunities* through the mobilization of regional cooperation and interaction. Theories of the *new regionalism* have therefore become one of the conceptual foundations of contemporary European modernization, emphasizing the *spatialization* of social theory and the search for models of civilizational development within the contexts of *global memory* and *conflictual unity* [16].

Can Ukrainian social sciences and humanities generate innovative concepts of regional development within the context of *conflictual unity* and provide the theoretical and methodological foundations for modeling a post-war *space of opportunities* through regional recovery strategies? We believe that the answer is affirmative, as the role of regional imperatives in shaping the state's geopolitical and security potential has acquired particular theoretical and practical significance. In today's globalized world, the success of states — and, consequently, their security — largely depends on how effectively they are organized and governed in the regional dimension. The issue may be framed even more broadly as the need to redefine — or, more precisely, to formulate new imperatives for — security policy. This implies that space and territoriality should remain not only central to socio-security assessment but also at the core of regional policy priorities. In developed societies, this principle has been widely recognized, and the potential of scholarly research has been extensively utilized to mitigate conflict-related dimensions of regional development and to provide methodological support for projects aimed at the regional structuring of space.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE SPATIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

The analysis of the interaction between space as an object and space as a subject of regional relations draws upon a broad spectrum of theoretical concepts. Their synthesis makes it possible to explain the processes through which global and regional territorial formations are structured and

differentiated. Such research is conducted within the framework of geocultural methodology, which focuses on the geographical and cultural markers of social space, as well as its more recent geo-information and geocultural modifications. Traditional methodological territorialism has gradually been replaced by a new ontology of social inquiry, in which the density of information flows, control over those flows, and the circulation of particular *geopolitical imaginaries* within the communication space have assumed a central role. The multiparadigmatic and interdisciplinary integration of methods has become a defining characteristic of postmodern approaches to the study of social reality. These approaches are grounded in the concepts of the *glocal* organization of space, reterritorialization, and the changing role of the region within the global *space of flows*. Such innovative perspectives not only overcome the limitations of rigid universalism but also provide a conceptual foundation for the spatial analysis of cultural landscapes, values, and identities within a broader civilizational framework.

Adapted to the contemporary context of geopolitics and geoeconomics, geocultural analysis provides the foundation for constructing the country's *spatial identity* by incorporating its resource potential and territorial organization while taking into account geographical, linguistic, cultural, and religious characteristics. From this perspective, geocultural analysis makes it possible to understand both the uniqueness of a particular region and its embeddedness within the sociocultural space of the nation and the wider world. It also facilitates the examination of the region's identity, collective mentality, and locally specific forms of communicative interaction.

At the same time, the logic of regional geocultural dynamics cannot be understood without considering the historical processes that have shaped it and the interaction of region-forming factors across different historical periods. Reflecting on the geocultural boundaries of historicity, the Polish philosopher B. Skarga has metaphorically observed that human knowledge resembles a map of

reality — an incomplete map, full of gaps. Thought functions like a cartographer: it selects individual regions, attempts to delineate their contours, and inevitably succumbs to illusion and error [17]. Such errors and misconceptions in the study of regionalization processes can be minimized through the application of the *meso-level* concept, within which the regional environment is viewed as the fundamental level for preserving cultural diversity and creating favorable conditions for identifying optimal forms of cooperation among local communities. The meso-level constitutes the arena where social and cultural processes intersect along the continuum of *interest* and *differentiation*. Whereas globalization is commonly understood as a movement from the macro to the micro level, and localization as a movement from the micro to the macro level, the meso-level not only mediates these processes but also transforms them by adapting global dynamics to regional conditions while enabling local interests to move upward and be effectively represented.

In socio-economic research, the conceptualization of the meso-level as the central element of the macro-meso-micro system has been based on its interpretation as both an ontological category and a distinctive domain in which social norms and institutions emerge and evolve [18]. Within mesoeconomics, a region is defined as a self-sufficient territorial entity characterized by relatively homogeneous geospatial conditions and a distinctive orientation of its productive potential. A fundamental property of the meso-level is its bimodality, which enables the adaptation of a local initiative or a general rule (*generic rule*) to regional conditions while simultaneously transforming the established patterns of interaction both among individual structures at the micro level and between the macro and micro levels [19]. The analytical concept of the region as a meso-object (*unit*) is founded on the existence of a general rule that is applicable to the regional socio-economic system and reflects the integrity of a territory possessing its own distinctive characteristics. Since the macrosystem is composed of meso-objects,

understanding the relationship between local and global processes and designing effective regional strategies is impossible without investigating the transformation of mesostructures. From this perspective, socio-economic development is interpreted as the result of the emergence, adaptation, diffusion, and institutionalization of meso-rules across both the macro and micro levels.

In sociocultural studies, the meso-level concept makes it possible to view the region as an integrated system of sociocultural relationships and communication networks, to assess its role in transmitting both national and global cultural values, and to understand its historically shaped uniqueness alongside its position within the political and cultural space of the state. It is at the regional level that the outcomes of sociocultural interaction accumulate, contributing both to the preservation and the continuous development of local cultures and to the emergence of new forms of regional consciousness, including territorial identity and collective mentality. As a result, regionality emerges as a new qualitative phenomenon arising from the interaction of local sociocultural clusters and serving as a source of cohesion within the global-regional space.

The development of the meso-level concept has provided a strong impetus for the advancement of regional studies and has contributed to the establishment of methodological approaches for the spatial and sociocultural analysis of transnational, intranational, and subnational regions. By focusing on the development of the *particular* within a specific regional chronotope, regional studies has required methodological tools capable of explaining the distinctive character of historical development at the intersections of civilizations, geopolitical systems, and ethnocultural traditions. The meso-level concept has become precisely the analytical link between macro- and micro-level approaches, providing a framework for explaining the dynamic transformation of regional sociocultural systems and the heightened dynamism of local communities. With the emergence of regional studies as a distinct interdisciplinary field

within the social sciences and humanities, researchers have acquired a spatial modeling instrument comparable in significance to the role that periodization plays in the structural and historical organization of temporal processes.

The theoretical and methodological foundations of regional studies define the region as the spatial meso-level of the organization of the global community. This perspective not only facilitates the mitigation or resolution of tensions between global and local development strategies but also enables the differentiation of global processes across regions and the adaptation of general trends to local historical and cultural contexts. Within this framework, the region is regarded not as a passive object of policy but as an active political actor — a distinctive political system endowed with the capacity for regional self-government and political self-determination within the state. The increasing complexity of the global geopolitical landscape, driven by the simultaneous processes of globalization and regionalization, has accelerated the transformation of regions into integral components of the global networked space.

Within the conceptual framework of regional studies, a region is regarded as possessing a higher degree of spatial stability than administrative-territorial units. The multidimensional nature of the concept of *region* is interpreted through a series of spatial imperatives: the global dimension (the region as a macro-region), the geopolitical dimension (the region as a sphere of geopolitical strategies), the territorial dimension (the region as a territorial-spatial unit), the administrative dimension (the region as a legally institutionalized element of the territorial organization of the state), the social dimension (the region as a socio-territorial community characterized by the localization of social relations), the ethnocultural dimension (the region as part of a country distinguished by specific ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious characteristics), and the security dimension (the region as a space shaped by conflicts and military confrontation). Within this multidimensional perspective, regionalization emerges as a univer-

sal model of spatial development aimed at establishing an integrated system that balances national and regional interests, preserves the distinctive status of regional entities, and provides the conceptual foundations for the formation of a secure spatial environment.

Regionalization serves as a mechanism capable of optimizing the socio-political structure of society by maintaining an internal balance between two opposing tendencies: the aspiration toward national unity and the simultaneous pursuit of regional differentiation and partnership with other regions on the basis of equality. Such a balance reinforces the fundamental principle of regionalization — “unity in diversity” (*In varietate concordia*) — which promotes favorable conditions for the development of regional cultures within historically established territorial boundaries while respecting the territorial identities of neighboring regions. According to this principle, diversity is not suppressed but rather recognized as a valuable resource that can be harnessed for shared development and progress. The principle also has an important security dimension, as it assumes that diverse components of a broader system are capable of peaceful coexistence and constructive interaction within a common security space.

The regional level not only provides the most appropriate scale for implementing the principle of spatial differentiation, but also creates favorable conditions for the development and implementation of regional security strategies. Contemporary society faces numerous risks and threats that extend far beyond the traditional domains of security policy, affecting new dimensions of political, social, and even everyday life within regions. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has become a turning point in the evolution of global security, fundamentally reshaping approaches to regional security strategies, prompting a reassessment of international cooperation, and intensifying collective efforts to restore a secure environment. The successful resolution of the challenges confronting Ukraine in rebuilding its security space largely depends on the development of innovative scien-

tific concepts for the post-war reconstruction of its regions, taking into account their security, spatial, economic, and sociocultural characteristics.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The Russian–Ukrainian war has not only caused extensive destruction of Ukrainian cities and villages and devastated critical infrastructure across numerous communities and regions, but has also created new challenges that had not been considered before the war and have now become dominant. These include the disruption of established economic ties, unprecedented population displacement, and growing difficulties in ensuring adequate social protection for the population [20]. Unfortunately, the adverse consequences of the military conflict will continue to influence the formation of Ukraine's security environment and that of its regions for many years. Nevertheless, despite these large-scale losses, Ukraine has retained substantial potential for recovery, supported by international assistance and the implementation of effective regional reconstruction programs [21]. Despite the objective challenges posed by the ongoing military situation, the Ukrainian state should make every effort to optimize its regional development policy in accordance with European standards and the principles of competitiveness and territorial cohesion.

The principal directions for optimizing regional policy have been defined in the State Strategy for Regional Development for 2021–2027, which aims to create conditions for balanced socioeconomic development across regions and to reduce regional disparities. The overarching objective of the national regional policy is to promote sustainable development and national cohesion capable of ensuring a high quality of life in a united, decentralized, competitive, and democratic Ukraine. Its priorities include creating conditions for the return of displaced citizens and the reintegration of war veterans into civilian life; ensuring the efficient use of the endogenous potential of territo-

ries; and strengthening cooperation among regions and with European partners to accelerate the country's economic growth and development [22].

This objective is pursued through the implementation of three strategic goals:

- ◆ fostering a cohesive state in its social, humanitarian, economic, environmental, security, and spatial dimensions;
- ◆ enhancing national competitiveness;
- ◆ developing an effective system of multilevel governance.

The first strategic goal is achieved through the promotion of economic growth centers (agglomerations and cities); the preservation of the natural environment and the sustainable use of natural resources; and the strengthening of development opportunities in territories requiring government support at both the macro and micro levels. It also envisages creating conditions for the reintegration of the temporarily occupied territories into the Ukrainian national space, developing regional infrastructure and digital transformation, and establishing a unified educational, information, and cultural space throughout the country. The second strategic goal focuses on the development of human capital, support for entrepreneurship, promotion of business internationalization, enhancement of the investment attractiveness of territories, and improvement of the technological level of regional economies.

The third strategic goal provides for the establishment of an effective system of local self-government and public administration based on the new administrative-territorial structure of Ukraine. It emphasizes strengthening both horizontal and vertical coordination between sectoral public policies and regional development policy. The Strategy also envisages the creation of an efficient public investment system at all levels of governance, capacity building for stakeholders involved in regional policy implementation, and the enhancement of information and analytical support for spatial planning.

Based on the State Strategy for Regional Development of Ukraine for 2021–2027, the Roadmap

for Decentralization has been developed [23], defining the key priorities of regional policy. These priorities include creating secure and favorable socioeconomic conditions for the return of Ukrainian citizens to their regions and territorial communities; restoring and developing infrastructure based on the principles of transparency, accountability, sustainability, inclusiveness, energy efficiency, resilience to security threats, and economic feasibility; and strengthening the institutional capacity of territorial communities and regions in project management, digitalization, anti-corruption, and strategic planning. The Roadmap has also prioritized the restoration of human capital and economic growth through the effective utilization of the endogenous potential of territories and the implementation of regional smart specialization strategies. It has emphasized greater public participation in decision-making at the national, regional, and local levels, as well as the restoration of ecosystems damaged by the Russian Federation's armed aggression. Particular attention has also been paid to the development of multilevel governance, the alignment of Ukraine's regional development management system with EU procedures and best practices, and the promotion of intermunicipal, interregional, and cross-border cooperation.

Overall, the State Regional Development Strategy has been designed to ensure flexible adaptation to emerging challenges. It focuses on developing and implementing a comprehensive system of regional recovery measures while creating favorable conditions for the sustainable development of territorial communities. The Strategy is based on an integrated assessment of both the actual conditions of individual territories and the requirements of international standards for reconstruction and sustainable development. The regions most affected by the war have become the primary focal points of regional recovery policy, whereas local initiatives, international investment projects, and targeted state programs have become its principal implementation instruments. The effective development of the regions depends directly on coordinated cooperation among different

types of territorial communities, central government authorities, and local administrations, as well as on the establishment of adaptive and legitimate mechanisms for recovery and democratic governance.

The need to strengthen adaptive strategies for the recovery of regions and territorial communities was further emphasized in the revised version of the State Regional Development Strategy, approved in 2024. The updated Strategy is territorially oriented, takes into account current challenges and the objectives of European integration, and is grounded in the actual needs of regions and communities [24]. It is regarded as an important step toward aligning Ukraine's regional policy with the fundamental principles of the European Union Cohesion Policy, an effective instrument for achieving economic, social, and territorial cohesion. The State Regional Development Strategy also represents a significant contribution to the formation of a European model of regional policy in Ukraine. Its implementation is expected to rely on interconnected projects characterized by systemic consistency and logical coherence, supported by scientific analysis and incorporating the potential risks that may arise during the recovery process.

The highly declarative nature of comprehensive strategic plans defining the long-term objectives and directions of regional development has raised several legitimate questions. Have specific instruments for implementing the declared principles of regional development been identified? Is the current level of domestic regional analytics sufficient to provide effective analysis, identify underlying patterns, and generate well-substantiated conclusions? Is contemporary regional studies capable of proposing innovative analytical frameworks on which the strategies for the recovery and development of post-war Ukraine can be based?

It is evident that an effective response to contemporary challenges is impossible without comprehensive scientific analysis and the development of innovative concepts for the regional development of post-war Ukraine. Rigorous scientific inquiry has the capacity not only to anticipate future

developments but, in certain cases, to identify ways of optimizing them. The destruction of the social sphere and economic infrastructure across most regions of Ukraine has shifted the strategic priorities of regional policy toward security needs and recovery practices. The concept of optimal regionalization has created a favorable foundation for constructing integrated models of regional development that combine spatial, social, economic, and cultural dimensions of restoring Ukraine's security environment.

At the same time, the initial steps toward implementing optimal regionalization have already revealed a number of imbalances related to the quality of recovery programs, the level of public participation, financing, and compliance with environmental standards. It has already become apparent that not all territorial communities possess sufficient financial resources or qualified expert capacity to develop high-quality comprehensive recovery programs. This has resulted in the formalization of recovery processes and, in some cases, the neglect of local specificities and environmental concerns. Even large-scale international assistance cannot fully meet Ukraine's reconstruction needs. Therefore, developing a comprehensive, scientifically grounded strategy for Ukraine's post-war recovery that promotes the country's sustainable and dynamic development has become an urgent priority.

The principal direction for developing scientific strategies for post-war recovery lies in constructing an analytical framework capable of simultaneously addressing humanitarian and economic challenges, rebuilding infrastructure, and ensuring the rational allocation of material resources. The regional factor objectively constitutes the core of such a framework, as it provides the foundation for achieving regional and territorial balance while developing a European-oriented model of regional policy for Ukraine. The regional factor is regarded as a strategic and critical component of Ukraine's post-war recovery, encompassing economic development, the social sphere, cultural identity, and environmental sustainability. Accordingly, only a comprehensive approach to regional recovery —

one that integrates security, economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions — can ensure the effective reconstruction of the country.

In terminological terms, the regional factor is traditionally understood as the set of conditions and characteristics that influence the development of a particular region, define its distinctive features, and determine its development potential. It encompasses natural resources, geographical location, climate, historical development, socioeconomic structure, political and administrative characteristics, and cultural specificities. The concept of the regional factor is fundamental to understanding the developmental trajectories of different territories and to formulating effective regional development strategies. Taking regional specificities into account enables more efficient utilization of available resources, more effective problem-solving, and better achievement of strategic objectives.

In regional economics, the regional factor has been applied to examine the specific features of regional economic development, assess regional competitiveness, and identify opportunities for sustainable growth. Particular attention has been paid to issues related to living standards, the quality of education, and the performance of social institutions that determine social capital and the region's capacity for innovation [25]. In the context of regional policy, the regional factor serves as the basis for designing development strategies aimed at reducing territorial disparities and promoting balanced regional development. Political and administrative specificities are reflected in governance systems, legislative frameworks, and the initiatives undertaken by local authorities to promote regional development, as well as in the effectiveness of regional decision-making and policy implementation. Under current conditions, particular attention has been paid to the prospects for the post-war recovery of Ukraine's economy and its regions, the analysis of the spatial dimensions of political development during and after military conflict, and the formulation of the fundamental principles, mechanisms, and instruments of the national spatial development policy [26].

In social geography, the regional factor has been used to investigate the influence of regional conditions on social structure, population mobility, living standards, and other social processes, as well as to examine the role of geographical factors in the Russian–Ukrainian conflict [27]. In political geography, it has been employed to analyze the impact of regional characteristics on political processes and on the formation of political culture and patterns of public behavior. Environmental studies have focused on assessing the effects of anthropogenic pressure on the natural environment while accounting for regional environmental conditions, whereas management theory has applied the regional factor to the development of regional strategies for sustainable development that reflect the specific characteristics of individual regions [28].

In historical research, the regional factor has directed attention toward cultural heritage, traditions, and historical experience that shape regional cultural identity and influence long-term historical development. Regional cultural identity is of particular importance for Ukraine's recovery, as the preservation and development of language and culture constitute fundamental prerequisites for safeguarding cultural heritage and strengthening national identity. The regional factor has also played a decisive role in interpreting the spatial dimension of both Ukrainian and European history, making it possible to clarify the logic underlying contemporary cross-cutting and often controversial forms of dialogue within Ukrainian society [29]. It has been employed to explore how the spatial images of the past have influenced changing sociocultural realities and the processes of identity construction [30, 31]. Concepts of spatiotemporal dynamics have likewise been examined within the framework of the history of mentalities, with particular attention paid to the ways in which these perceptions have evolved across historical periods and among different regional cultures [32].

The dominant role of the regional factor in analytical paradigms of spatial interaction has led to the perception of local territory not only as a social environment that provides the material and

existential conditions of human life but also as an informational and motivational space within which individuals interact and interpret ongoing events. The heterogeneity of regional interpretations has highlighted the multidimensional nature of spatial development and the distinctiveness of the “life strategies” adopted by societies characterized by unique features that influence social, economic, and political processes. In this context, the regional factor has become an important instrument for addressing the needs of different territories and promoting balanced national development. Analysis of the influence of the regional factor on geopolitical dynamics has made it possible to interpret and anticipate alternative scenarios of regional development, migration flows, and the social consequences of economic transformations.

The success of national regional policy depends directly on the extent to which the regional factor is incorporated into the design of spatial interaction strategies. The social activity of regional communities is expressed through temporal strategies that shape perceptions of the past, present, and future while regulating sociocultural dynamics. These temporal strategies can be identified both at the micro level, through subject–object relations, and at the contextual level, through structural relationships and sociocultural hierarchies. The combination of historical, cultural, and structural determinants substantially influences the social and security conditions of regional development. It is evident that the formulation of security practices depends directly on regional development initiatives, national socioeconomic programs, and the priorities and objectives pursued by both political centers and local communities. National security can be ensured only through the creation of a geopolitical, geoeconomic, and geocultural space that provides favorable conditions for preserving national identity, developing regional potential, and preventing the loss of control over national territory and borders.

Thus, the location of contemporary Ukraine within several geopolitical spaces simultaneously has created numerous security challenges while also

opening significant geostrategic opportunities. The boundaries of geopolitical formations may become either lines of internal division or structural preconditions for multidimensional and multi-vector regional interaction. Unfortunately, regional structuring in Ukraine has traditionally been viewed primarily as an administrative instrument for facilitating territorial governance. Regional studies have not been regarded as a tool for analyzing the unique characteristics of individual regions and for developing development strategies that reflect these specificities. Only recently has it become evident that issues related to regionalization constitute a fundamentally political problem that should be incorporated into the core paradigms of national security [33].

The insufficient formalization and methodological development of scientific knowledge concerning Ukraine's regionalization have become particularly evident under the current wartime conditions. The country continues to experience the consequences of increasing interregional disparities, fragmented legislative and regulatory frameworks governing regional policy, and the absence of coherent models for balanced spatial development. A positive development, however, has been that regional and historical arguments have assumed an increasingly important role in discussions concerning the appropriate model of interaction between the central government and the regions, the principles of territorial reform, and the relationship between regional and national interests. This development is entirely justified, as only the social sciences and humanities are capable of providing well-founded answers to such fundamental questions as why the borders of the Ukrainian state do not coincide with the historical area of ethnic Ukrainian settlement and why the existing system of territorial organization of state administration and local self-government requires further reform.

Accordingly, the application of the meso-level concept together with the innovative methodological approaches developed in regional studies can provide a systematic framework for investigating regional development. These approaches have fa-

cilitated a deeper understanding of the regional factor as a system-forming element of spatial dynamics in historical perspective and as the structural and functional foundation for enhancing the effectiveness of post-war recovery processes within the broader context of establishing a pan-European security environment. To trace the evolution of geopolitical organization within the societies from which the Ukrainian nation has emerged, it is essential to investigate the sociopolitical foundations of spatial regionalization and the historical logic underlying territorial zoning. Furthermore, plans for rebuilding Ukraine's regional space should place particular emphasis on preserving the local specificities of spatial territories and maintaining the sociocultural code of each region, which constitutes the principal marker of local identity.

The sociocultural code of a region cannot be understood without examining and interpreting the system of symbols, meanings, norms, values, and behavioral patterns that are unique to a particular sociocultural space and shape the identity of its inhabitants. According to Umberto Eco, a cultural code represents a structural model through which the culture of a society can be "read." Reconstructing a cultural image is therefore possible only by decoding an entire system of interrelated codes. Consequently, identifying the sociocultural code of a region — as an element of cultural space and a marker of identity — requires the ability to interpret the encoded information preserved in a wide variety of historical and cultural sources [34]. The sociocultural code constitutes a conceptual framework through which culture interprets reality by determining what is considered acceptable or unacceptable, important or secondary. It manifests itself through language, rituals, myths, and traditions transmitted across generations. Understanding the historical context in which the sociocultural code has been formed is essential for decoding it and for comprehending the motivations, expectations, and patterns of interaction that characterize regional communities.

The conceptual framework of regional studies provides the methodological resources necessary

to “decode” the sociocultural code of a region and to represent it as both an intellectual construct and a phenomenon of public consciousness. Applying the methodology of regional studies has enabled the development of an analytical framework that encompasses regional diagnostics, the identification of high-risk areas, the analysis of historically formed regional identities, and the constructive resolution of regional conflicts. The analytical integration of the sociocultural codes of all Ukrainian regions and the construction of shared national values, meanings, norms, and symbols constitute an effective instrument for overcoming identity-based conflicts in the context of threats to information and cultural security. National security depends directly on the effective protection of the information domain, and this dependence will continue to increase as information technologies advance and the capabilities of modern communication and information systems expand, making their influence on the political and ideological sphere increasingly decisive and pervasive [35].

The challenges associated with restoring Ukraine's regional space clearly demonstrate the need to strengthen the security dimension of regional studies. Rather than focusing exclusively on identifying and forecasting potential threats, this approach should emphasize the systematic assessment and mitigation of risks in order to improve the management of security challenges. This need has arisen directly from contemporary realities, including the Russian–Ukrainian war, the destruction of cities and critical regional infrastructure, uncontrolled migration, the transformation of established value systems, and the emergence of regional conflicts. Security regional studies, as an emerging interdisciplinary field involving the analysis of threats and security challenges at the regional level, has the potential to generate effective security strategies that have become critically important for maintaining the stable development of the Ukrainian state under current conditions.

The innovative forecasting capacity of security regional studies lies in the application of differentiated and adaptive mechanisms for developing mo-

dels of reconstruction, spatial reorganization, and regional development in post-war Ukraine. Its practical orientation has focused on creating and implementing analytical tools for examining the regional security dichotomy of the contemporary world by clarifying both the role of security in regional interaction and the significance of the regional factor in establishing a stable security environment.

The applied concepts developed within security regional studies have been directed toward investigating the specific characteristics and developmental patterns of war-affected regions in order to formulate effective reconstruction strategies. One of the principal priorities has been the creation of a geoinformation database to support regional recovery programs, promote social and economic justice, and ensure the sustainable development of regions in the future. Applied models of post-war regional development envisage a comprehensive “restart” of territorial dynamics, emphasizing greater resilience of the spatial system, more balanced conditions for different settlement patterns, the reconfiguration of socioeconomic priorities, and consideration of existing spatial shifts — that is, substantial changes in societal values and development priorities [36].

The practical application of security regional studies has been reflected in the modeling of regional recovery policies based on a territorial approach and a functional security-oriented typology of regional structures. Within the current framework for regional reconstruction and development, four principal functional categories have been identified: recovery territories, regional growth poles, territories with special conditions, and territories of sustainable development. Nevertheless, effective strategic planning for the post-war recovery and development of Ukraine's regions should be based on a comprehensive approach to national security through the development of security algorithms for each territorial community as a key determinant of its future development. Regions should therefore be grouped into security clusters — interconnected systems characterized by similar security challenges that are capable of responding

collectively to threats in order to enhance the overall resilience of the national security system. Security clusters are viewed as the foundation of an integrated risk management approach that combines preventive measures, continuous monitoring, analytical risk assessment, and coordinated action at both the local and regional levels. Classifying regions according to security characteristics provides a practical instrument for implementing security policy, as it enables the consolidation of resources, improves the flexibility of response, and supports a systematic approach to addressing threats at the local level [37, 38].

It should be recognized that Ukraine's recovery involves far more than rebuilding destroyed infrastructure. It also encompasses restoring sustainable sociocultural development within communities and regions, strengthening national and civic identity, and establishing a humanitarian security environment based on European models of regional policy. The systematic enhancement of the humanitarian dimension of security policy — taking into account regional diversity and territorial identities within Ukraine — has become an urgent

priority for the Ukrainian state. Humanitarian security constitutes an integral component of national security, a fundamental safeguard of human rights, and an essential prerequisite for compliance with international humanitarian law. Ukraine's meaningful participation in the development of a common European security space depends on numerous factors. However, it is determined to a considerable extent by an understanding of the strategic importance of regional security for national development and by the ability to formulate a modern regional policy based on the innovative paradigms of European regional studies. Consequently, applying the methodological potential of security regional studies to the modeling of spatial strategies for the post-war territorial organization of Ukraine and to the development of analytical paradigms of spatial interaction in accordance with European scientific and methodological standards is of particular importance. Equally important is the institutionalization of security regional studies as an academic discipline and its integration into the priority areas of R&D, technological, and innovation policy.

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РЕГІОНАЛЬНИЙ ФАКТОР У ВІДНОВЛЕННІ БЕЗПЕКОВОГО ПРОСТОРУ УКРАЇНИ: КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНО-МЕТОДОЛОГІЧНЕ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

Вступ. В умовах війни починати комплекс заходів з відновлення безпекового простору України складно та ризиковано, втім не менш ризиковано втрачати дорогоцінний час, чекаючи на завершення бойових дій. Концепція відбудови України орієнтована на формування національного безпекового середовища й відновлення європейського простору безпеки як ареалу свободи, гідності та справедливості.

Проблематика. Недостатнє врахування у процесах відновлення України ролі регіонального фактора, як концептуального «мезорівня» стабілізації соціокультурних систем, може мати негативні наслідки.

Мета. Визначення сутності регіонального фактора як системологічної та структурно-функціональної основи стимулювання ефективності відновлювальних процесів у повоєнний період.

Матеріали й методи. Застосовано геокультурні підходи, які інтерпретують регіональну культуру як основу для формування «просторового образу» країни з урахуванням географічних, мовних, культурних та релігійних особливостей.

Результати. Аналіз засвідчує ефективність концепції «мезорівня» для розробки стратегій формування повоєнного безпекового простору України. На її основі регіональне середовище репрезентується як базовий елемент збереження культурної багатоманітності та оптимальна форма суспільної організації.

Висновки. Інтеграція України до загальноєвропейського безпекового простору передбачає усвідомлення стратегічної ролі фактора регіональної безпеки у розвитку держави та нагальної потреби розробки сучасної концепції регіональної політики. Реалізація завдань моделювання просторових стратегій повоєнного територіального устрою України і генерування аналітичних парадигм просторової взаємодії можлива лише на основі інноваційних науково-методологічних стандартів європейського регіоналізму. Безпекова регіоналістика як міждисциплінарна галузь знання потребує інституалізації й інтеграції до пріоритетних напрямів наукової, науково-технічної та інноваційної діяльності.

Ключові слова: мезорівень, регіоналістика, просторовий розвиток, регіональна безпека, відновлення безпекового середовища.