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Maintaining State Legitimacy through the Provision of Electronic Services: the Case of Ukraine
in the Context of the Russian Invasion of 2022

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Abstract

The provision of basic public services is a key way for fragile states to maintain the loyalty of their population and, accordingly, their legitimacy. Traditional efforts have focused on the provision of services in person; but in a moment of conflict and upheaval, how can the state continue to provide them? The current situation in Ukraine provides an opportunity to study an innovation in the provision of services: the use of e-government tools. In the context of the Russian invasion of 2022, Ukraine lost part of its territories, as well as the ability to exercise its authority in these areas. Additionally, Ukraine was forced to help many displaced persons both within Ukraine and abroad who had lost contact with local authorities. The Ukrainian state responded very quickly to these challenges and, through the Ministry of Digital Transformation, provided a number of electronic solutions. Through the Diia application, which gives Ukrainians access to identification documents, financial assistance, damaged property reporting, donation, crowdsourced intelligence efforts, and Ukrainian radio and TV broadcasts, Ukraine has attempted to maintain legitimacy in a turbulent time. This thesis builds a theoretical framework through the concepts of legitimacy, sovereignty, and state power, engages with the cases of other fragile states, and examines how Ukrainians use these services and, accordingly, how it impacts their view of the state. According to the interviews of Ukrainians displaced by the conflict collected for this work, the application has been received positively. Innovative electronic services not only make their lives more comfortable, but also make them feel proud and strengthen their faith in Ukraine. This belief is very complex and comes both from feelings of patriotism and attachment to their native places, as well as a sense of support in extreme conditions.

Acknowledgments

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"The state should be a convenient and understandable service for people, and the mobile application Diia is the first step towards this goal"

Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, 2020[1]

Chapter I. Introduction

Volodymyr Zelensky's most ambitious campaign promise was to build a digital state that can be communicated with through a smartphone.[2] The goal was to save the people of Ukraine from the burden of in-person administrative and bureaucratic procedures. In addition to an electronic platform, the President emphasized the need for high-speed Internet in all settlements and the provision of courses on handling information technologies, which would increase the level of computer literacy and the number of active users among the population of Ukraine. To this end, on September 19, 2019, a Ministry of Digital Transformation was created.[3]

The Ministry has developed Diia - a mobile application, web portal and digital state brand in Ukraine.[4] In addition to the digitalization of public services, an important goal of this product was to facilitate more effective communication between citizens and the state, which then would subsequently lead to an increase in citizens' trust in the state. Interestingly, even the name of the platform stands for "The State and I" (Diia, Derzhava i ia; UKR: *Дія, Держава і я*).

By the end of 2021, there were already 15 digital documents (driver's license, student ID, regular ID, passport, birth certificate, etc.) available in the application. Also, one can sign documents through *Дія.Підпис* (Diia.Pidpis, ENG: Diia.Signature).[5] 72 services were available through the portal, and 9 services – through the phone application. Among them there are:

- *єМалятко* (eMaliatko; ENG: eBaby), a grouping of 9 services from various authorities related to the birth of a child, such as registration of birth, the appointment of financial assistance, etc.;[6]
- Субсидії та пенсії (Subsydii ta psnsii; ENG: Subsidies and pensions);[7]
- *єЗахист* (eZahyst; ENG: eProtection), a tool through which Ukrainians are able to learn about the basic rules of cybersecurity and understand where their personal information is stored;
- *єПідтримка* (ePidtrymka; ENG: eAid), a program to support vaccination against COVID-19, support the health of the population and those industries most affected by the pandemic.

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[1] President of Ukraine, "Volodymyr Zelensky: The Diia application is the first step on the way to building a state-service," accessed May 12, URL: https://www.president.gov.ua/news/volodimir-zelenskij-dodatok-diya-ce-pershij-krok-na-shlyahu-59633

[2] Alexandra Khudyakova, "Going Online: Politicians' Promises for Digitization," Slovo I Dilo, accessed April 15, URL: https://ru.slovoidilo.ua/2020/03/18/statja/politika/perexodim-rezhim-onlajn-obeshhaniya-politikov-didzhitalizacii

[3] Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of September 18, 2019 № 856, "Issues of the Ministry of Digital Transformation", URL: https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pitannya-ministerstva-cifrovoyi-t180919

[4] Diia, Government services online, URL: https://diia.gov.ua

[5] Diia Paperless, Diia.Pidpis, URL: https://paperless.diia.gov.ua/instruction/yak-otrimati-diyapidpis

[6] Diia, ieMaliatko, URL: https://diia.gov.ua/services/yemalyatko

[7] Diia, Subsidies, URL: https://diia.gov.ua/services/zvernennya-na-priznachennya-zhitlovih-subsidij-v-elektronnij-formi

It is also a general tool to promote physical culture, sports, and transport, to increase the level of digitalization in Ukraine.[8]

In 2021, no one could imagine that a few months later a full-scale armed conflict would begin throughout the territory of Ukraine, forcing millions of people to leave their homes. According to UN estimates, about 12.8 million people have become displaced.[9] 7.7 million of them were internally displaced in Ukraine, equivalent to 17.5 percent of Ukraine's population. For these people, the Diia platform has remained a link with the state and transformed to meet the challenges of the time to help those whose health and property were in danger. This thesis will investigate developments of the Diia platform in Ukraine related to the Russian invasion and examine how people use these functions. This will help in understanding how significant their contribution is to maintaining faith in the legitimacy of the state and, therefore, its survival in a time of severe disruption.

The overall structure of the thesis is as follows. First, Chapter II will set out the main theoretical concepts of legitimacy, state power, sovereignty, and the state at war, which will then be linked to the case of Ukraine. Next, Chapter III will offer a review of literature that explores other cases of fragile states and demonstrates the scholarly consensus that legitimacy can be maintained through the provision of public services. In Chapter IV, the methods, research objectives and question will be fully laid out to prepare for Chapter V, which focuses on empirical findings about Diia's wartime innovations, as well as the experience and impressions of the interviewees who have used these innovations. Finally, Chapter VI summarizes Diia's role in maintaining Ukraine's legitimacy in the context of war and offers concluding remarks.

The main goal of this work is to explore how the Diia e-governance platform affects the perception of displaced Ukrainians of their state, and how it helps Ukraine maintain its legitimacy. Using a structured theory and empirical findings, the work will show that faith in the state is a complex phenomenon that is built on the individual perception of the state. But despite this diversity of views, in the case of Ukraine it is clear that Ukrainians are proud of the success of their country, in particular of Diia. This e-government tool symbolizes innovation in the governmental sector and brings many benefits to the lives of Ukrainian residents, which supports their faith in their country in a time of crisis.

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[8] Diia, eAid, URL: https://e-aid.diia.gov.ua

[9] UNOHCHR, "Ukraine: Millions of displaced traumatised and urgently need help, say experts," accessed April 17, URL: https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/05/ukraine-millions-displaced-traumatised-and-urgently-need-help-say-experts

Chapter II. Theory

Before examining the ways in which Ukrainians view their state, it is important to set out foundational concepts and theories through which their views will be examined. This chapter will offer an overview of theoretical thought on the state, legitimacy, state power, sovereignty, and the state at war, and situate these concepts within the situation in Ukraine. In doing so, this will demonstrate the need for Ukraine to develop a mechanism to reinforce its control over territory and people regardless of military success or failure.

From its earliest forms, the state has always had a special organizing and unifying role for the people who belonged to it. According to Aristotle, the state is the highest form of union between people.[10] It is the highest goal of ethics, the moral activity of man, and only in public life does a person find the opportunity to fulfill their destiny. Plato, in turn, saw the state as something dynamic and developing, always striving for an ideal.[11] He reflects on different types of state: aristocracy, monarchy, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny. But the most important thing that unites all types of the state is a desire for effective organization and unity as an integral organism. Plato explained this need through an efficient division of labor, which leads to rapid economic development and the well-being of citizens. Even after millennia, states have not lost their main role. In the 18th century, Montesquieu continued to use republics, monarchies, and despotism in his typology of states.[12] He also spoke of the organizational and unifying role of the state, building his arguments about its importance not around economic expediency, but around political freedoms and rules that could provide reasonable organization of the state and ensure the rule of law. This development of thought made it possible to speak about regime legitimacy.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy is defined as "a popular acceptance of a government, political regime, or system of governance".[13] Acceptance usually comes from shared values between the ruling regime and the population of the state it governs. But it is important to note that political support is not always absolute or specific. According to David Easton, support can be specific (towards a specific political personality) or diffuse (in relation to abstract institutions or the regime as a whole).[14] One of the first theorists on legitimacy which goes in conjuncture with authority, Max Weber, set out three ideal types. The first type is traditional.[15] It is built on customs and traditions that have been in force for many years and cannot be doubted. Regimes with traditional legitimacy, such as monarchies, are maintained out of a long-term habit of loyalty to tradition. The second type is charismatic. According to it, adherence to the regime is built on trust in the charismatic personality of the leader. Such regimes are usually authoritarian and last as long as the leader is alive. The death or disappearance of a leader can lead to the collapse of the regime. The third type is rational. It comes from the rational adherence to established political norms, that is, the formation of the

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[10] Aristotle's Politics. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1920.

[11] Plato. The Dialogues of Plato. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984

[12] Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat, baron de, 1689-1755. The Spirit of Laws. London :Printed for J. Collingwood, 1823.

[13] Britannica, Legitimacy, URL: https://www.britannica.com/topic/legitimacy

[14] Easton, David. "A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support." British Journal of Political Science 5, no. 4 (1975): 435–57. http://www.jstor.org/stable/193437.

[15] Weber, Max. *Economy, and society; an outline of interpretive sociology.* New York: Bedminster Press, 1968.

regime corresponds to the political system of the state. Such legitimacy is most associated with democratic regimes. Additionally, Weber describes the basis for the validity of legitimate order. Among the main factors of adherence to an order, he identifies internal (beliefs and habits) and external (needs and circumstances).

These factors as well as the types of legitimacy do not exist separately from each other and can simultaneously influence the situation or unfold it. The case of Ukraine in wartime, clearly demonstrates the versatility of this concept. The legitimacy of the Ukrainian government is supported not only by the fact that it follows the legal democratic tradition of the Ukrainian state (rational type) but is largely reinforced by the charismatic personality of President Zelensky, who has become the undisputed leader of the nation (charismatic type). Also, a combination of various factors helps people continue to believe in the Ukrainian state: the patriotism of the population in the face of Russian aggression (as internal factor) and the desire of the Ukrainian state to protect its population and continue to provide all possible services to support its life (as external factor).

State power

Legitimate state governments are understood to have the right to act on behalf of their constituents, and this is how we approach the concept of state power. The Oxford Dictionary rightly defines power as an authority that is given or delegated to a person or body.[16] Numerous thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Weber have conceptualized power. But Robert Dahl, goes further, attempting to set out a clear and structured framework to this concept, and even measure it.[17] He found this goal to be unattainable since it is practically impossible to designate a scale of power. But he was able to identify two things. First, where there are people, there will always be the power of one over the other. People tend to build chains of dependence, and they will exist regardless of the state system, although they will change their form depending on it. Second, state power, due to its complex structure, will always be multi-level and multifaceted. Representatives of either municipal, or regional, or central authorities can use their power in an overlapping fashion, across the same areas. Ultimately, there are no universal criteria for measuring or comparing levels of power.

This explanation of power is crucial for understanding the case of Ukraine in the realities of the Russian invasion. Ukraine has partially lost physical control over part of its territories; in most cases these are separate districts of several regions. The population of these territories has lost the physical ability to receive administrative services in their areas, take part in political life or communicate with municipal authorities. At the same time, all evacuated residents have access to regional or central authorities, and e-government tools allows anyone from these territories to contact those authorities and even receive services online, regardless of physical location. This shows that the multi-level power plays an important role in maintaining state authority and helps to maintain contact with citizens even in cases where one of the levels is no longer functioning. For Ukraine, parts of which regions are being under occupation and, accordingly, no longer represent Ukrainian authorities at the municipal level, this made it possible to maintain contact with citizens and state authority through online tools.

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[16] LEXICO, Power, URL: https://www.lexico.com/definition/power

[17] Dahl, R, The Concept of Power. Behavioral Science, 2, 201-215, 1957.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/bs.3830020303

Sovereignty

As a result of the Russian occupation, there are still practical limitations on the Ukrainian state's exercise of power in a number of its territories, as a result of the Russian occupation. According to Jean Bodin, sovereignty is the absolute and permanent power of the state.[18] He emphasizes the supremacy of state power, its constancy, its absolute character, and independence from all possible actors both within the state and in the international arena. In fact, the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 consolidated this vision of sovereignty and created a system of international relations in which the sovereign state is the center.[19] The development of legal systems complicated the idea of sovereignty. For example, Francis Harry Hinsley, a modern thinker, talks about sovereignty within the political processes of a particular state, with an emphasis on the rules of a particular political society.[20] This is a significant transformation of the relatively simple older vision of sovereignty, where the absolute power of the state was at the basis of everything. But it does not at all cancel the role of state power and preserves the principle of non-interference of states in each other's internal affairs. Subsequently, Stephen Krasner brought more specifics to the understanding of the concept by highlighting the main areas in which states can exercise their sovereignty.[21] These include full control over the territory of the state, recognized within the state borders; control over the population and internal processes in the state; control of state power through legitimate authorities; as well as non-interference of external actors in internal affairs and their formal recognition of state and its authority. The modern recognition and institutionalization of this concept at the highest level became possible through the inclusion of the concept of sovereignty in the UN statute, which is officially accepted by all Members of the organization. Namely, the UN Charter states the following: "The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members".[22]

In the case of Ukraine, the Russian Federation has ignored the sovereignty of Ukraine as it is formed in the Westphalian understanding of state and interstate relations. Under the conditions of the partial occupation, Ukraine is not able to control a significant part of its territory, as well as the population that lives on them. Legitimate municipal and regional authorities cannot exercise their powers. The Russian government openly denies the existence of Ukraine as a state. Such a threat to Ukraine's sovereignty not only undermines the notion of sovereignty that has been established for many years, but also the massive system of international agreements that guarantees its maintenance. This is a challenge not only for the current system of international relations, but also for the citizens of Ukraine themselves, who despite the precarious position of their state try to maintain faith in it. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian government must assure people's commitment since it draws its legitimacy from their trust.

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[18] Bodin, Jean, Six books of the commonwealth. Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1955.

[19] Croxton, D., The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 and the Origins of Sovereignty, 1999, The International History Review, 21(3), pp.569-591.

[20] Hinsley F.H. Sovereignty. Cambridge, 1986, 243 p.

[21] Krasner, Stephen D, Problematic Sovereignty: Contested Rules and Political Possibilities, 2001. pp. 6–12.

[22] Charter of the United Nations, Chapter I — Purposes and Principles, Article 2(1)–(5), URL: https://legal.un.org/repertory/art2.shtml

State at war

For a general understanding of the war concept, we can isolate the main characteristics of it.[23] War happens between two or more socio-political structures, such as tribes, unions, or states. Modern philosophers, of course, focus on states as the main units of the modern system of international relations. The main purpose of war is to persuade one actor to act in the political interests of another. As a rule, military conflicts occur because of the inability to resolve controversial issues through diplomacy. War is an armed conflict involving armed forces and weapons. But it is also important to note that many definitions of war involve the formal act of declaring war by one or both sides of the conflict.

The term *war* has become less frequently used in literature and in public discourse, as modern political trends, which are formed by influential international actors such as the UN, promote and popularize a world order in which there would be no place for war.[24] Additionally, the term *armed conflict* has become more common in diplomacy and public discourse, because of its specific legal meanings and requirements. Chapter VI of the UN Charter, which is devoted to the pacific settlement of conflicts, avoids the word *war* and uses terms such as *military aggression* or *armed conflict.*[25] On the institutional level of the United Nations, the UN Security Council was created to avoid any armed conflicts among the members of the organization.

Today, in social media and news publications, we can see different formulations of what is happening in Ukraine, both war[26] and armed conflict.[27] The Russian Federation goes even further and seeking to justify its actions in Ukraine, deliberately avoids both terms *war* and *armed conflict* and actively uses the term *special operation for disarmament and denazification.* In doing so, it seeks to avoid invocation of both domestic and international legal requirements that accompany an armed conflict. It is difficult to assess the socio-ideological significance of this shift in discourses. What is happening in Ukraine can rightfully be called a war; however, neither side has ever officially declared it a war. What the actors involved call the situation does not cancel the reality: two states that are Members of the UN are in an armed conflict, and the system of international relations, which is built around the architecture of the UN, could not prevent this conflict. Additionally, Ukraine, as a country at war, is faced with the problem of the opponent's aggressive desire to subordinate it to its political will. It is this factor that threatens all the attributes of statehood described above: sovereignty, legitimacy, and state power. Maintaining and preserving the elements of statehood is a priority for Ukraine in the current conditions. And in adhering to the democratic foundations of state building, it is not enough just to fight back the occupied territories. To maintain its legitimacy, and hence the state's survival, Ukraine needs to maintain communication with its population, supporting it and building confidence in the capacity of the state even in war conditions.

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[23] Van der Dennen, Johan M.G., On War: Concepts, Definitions, Research Data - A Short Literature Review and Bibliography, 1980, n.d., 49.

[24] Greenwood, Christopher, The Concept of War in Modern International Law, The International and Comparative Law Quarterly 36, no. 2, 1987, 283–306. http://www.jstor.org/stable/759997.

[25] The United Nations, United Nations Charter, URL: https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text

[26] BBC News, War in Ukraine, URL: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-60525350

[27] Cordula Droege, Armed conflict in Ukraine: a recap of basic IHL rules, URL: https://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2022/03/17/armed-conflict-in-ukraine-a-recap-of-basic-ihl-rules/#:~:text=A%20party%20to%20an%20armed%20conflict%20must%20take%20constant%20care,to%20civilians%20and%20civilian%20property.

Chapter III. Literature review

The OECD report on the State's Legitimacy in Fragile Situations outlines four sources of legitimacy: input or process legitimacy (associated with the compliance with the specific established procedures); output or performance legitimacy (understood as an effective and quality delivery of public goods and services); shared beliefs (has more ideological and emotional context and is usually maintained through communal attachment to a certain belief tradition, or personality); and international legitimacy (acquired through other states' recognition).[28] No state draws its legitimacy from one source. All of them are often interconnected. Sometimes they complement each other, and sometimes they contradict.

Among its observations, the report explains that in more developed countries the functionality of the state is especially important for the population. In other words, such states receive the most legitimacy through the input they make. In less developed countries, everything works the other way around, since the result of the work of governments is important to the population, which they are able to see through the effective provision of services. These states receive the most legitimacy through the output they provide. But this does not necessarily mean that the effective provision of services is not at all important for residents of more developed countries. The popular focus merely shifts in a different direction because state services are already provided in a higher quality. Therefore, it also remains true that the less developed countries should focus on the performance of their work to meet the expectations of the population and gain maximum legitimacy.

Separately, in this vein, it is worth noting the importance of the output type of legitimacy for fragile states. The 2008 OECD report on *Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations: from Fragility to Resilience* contributes to deconstruction of this concept.[29] According to their definition, a state is fragile when its structures lack the political will and/or the capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development, and to safeguard the security and human rights of their population. Such shortcomings of fragile states directly affect the relationship between society and the state, since states are unable to meet the expectations of their citizens, which significantly weakens their legitimacy. Fragility can be framed in several ways, which leads to its categorization based on the degrees of vulnerability: weak state (incapable of exercising control over parts or all of its territory); divided state (internally divided into conflicting ethnic, national or religious groups); post-war state (survivors of violent and devastating armed conflicts); semi-authoritarian state (not fully democratic or undemocratic states where order is maintained by force or coercion); collapsed state (does not have functioning state institutions).

Before analyzing fragile states and their actions to maintain legitimacy, it is important to summarize the above framework for Ukrainian case. Even before the start of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation, Ukraine was classified as a developing state or a state in transition. According to the World Bank data, Ukraine is a lower middle-income country.[30] Accordingly, effective public service delivery has always been critical to maintaining the legitimacy of the state. But with the beginning of the Russian invasion, it no longer makes sense to base the analysis on this characteristic. In the context of the armed conflict, Ukraine lost around 20 percent of its

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[28] OECD, The State's Legitimacy in Fragile Situations: Unpacking Complexity, Paris, 2010
[29] OECD, Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations: from Fragility to resilience, Paris, 2008
[30] World Bank Data, Ukraine, URL: https://data.worldbank.org/country/ukraine

territory[31] as well as a great deal of infrastructure and industry, which significantly hit its economy: according to rough World Bank estimates, Ukraine's economy will shrink by about 45 percent in 2022.[32] It is most relevant now to speak of Ukraine as a fragile state. Accordingly, Ukraine can be viewed as a fragile state; and within the framework of fragile states set out before, it can be identified as a member of the weak state subcategory. This only reinforces the argument that it is vital for Ukraine to provide citizens with all possible services that can be provided under the current conditions. The work of the state to save the life and health of citizens will help maintain their trust in the state and preserve its legitimacy.

The next two cases will clearly demonstrate that connecting with citizens and maintaining their loyalty through quality service delivery is a central task for fragile states that want to maintain their legitimacy.

Iraqi case

Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, which started in the end of 1970s and lasted until 2003, was marked by a high level of authoritarian control. The desire to build an all-controlling state led to clientelism and corruption. The state lost contact with the citizens, which turned Iraq into a low-legitimacy country.[33] The establishment of a democratic regime after the fall of the Hussein regime was supposed to strengthen the connection between the state and the population, which would mean the legitimization of power. But even the election of the government did not inspire full confidence among the citizens of Iraq, since the elected government was seen as imposed by the United States, which did not assure the full legitimacy of power[34].

Strengthening faith in the state in Iraq became possible by conducting decentralization reforms and improving the provision of public services. Decentralization has moved the management of many processes to the localities, which has made the work of local authorities and communication with them more visible. The establishment of the supply of clean water to regions has become an important catalyst for legitimizing the government in the eyes of citizens. Such improvements are immediately felt by the people and demonstrate the effectiveness of the government. This is an example of how a fragile state, post-conflict Iraq in this case, was able to gain and maintain its legitimacy through delivering quality public services.

Afghan case

Afghanistan had also experienced a change of political regimes, even though some regions were not controlled by the new government and a full democratization of Afghanistan never happened. After the Taliban held almost the entire territory of Afghanistan under their control from 1996 to 2001, the US invasion changed the balance of power, and an attempt was made to establish a democratic regime. This regime lasted for about 20 years, until the Taliban took over the entire

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[31] BBC News, Ukraine war: Zelensky says Russia controls a fifth of Ukrainian territory, URL: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61675915
[32] The World Bank, Russian Invasion to Shrink Ukraine Economy by 45 Percent this Year, URL: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/04/10/russian-invasion-to-shrink-ukraine-economy-by-45-percent-this-year
[33] Brinkerhoff, Derick W., Wetterberg, Anna & Dunn, Stephen Service Delivery and Legitimacy in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States, Public Management Review, 14:2, 273-293, 2012, DOI: 10.1080/14719037.2012.657958
[34] Kaufmann, D., Kraay, A. and Mastruzzi, M., The Worldwide Governance Indicators: Methodology and Analytical Issues, Washington, DC: World Bank and Brookings Institution, 2010

country after the withdrawal of American troops in 2021. As in the previous case, the population of the state did not have strong confidence in the democratic regime, which became the main challenge for the government of Afghanistan.[35] And since 80 percent of Afghanistan's population lived in rural areas, in 2001 the government decided to start a rural development program that would make the government's efforts visible to most of the country's population. The National Solidarity Program (NSP) became one of the largest development projects in the world, involving many donors from all over the world. The goal of the program was to establish and consolidate democratic institutions in the regions and build the necessary infrastructure to maintain normal living conditions for citizens. In the long run, these two goals would complement each other. Democratic institutions would help to activate local elites and involve them in local politics, and new infrastructure would help to provide people with proper transportation, medical treatment, and education, which would increase the satisfaction of the population with the living standards and, most importantly, with the work of the government. The program became quite successful and began to increase the confidence of the Afghan people in their government, which contributed to its stronger legitimization. And although the trend of trust in the government grew, which was an intermediate success, the people of Afghanistan never began to believe absolutely in a democratic government. The high level of corruption impeded the implementation of the development program at the expected level. The lack of full effective service delivery resulted in the fact that the Afghans did not defend a democratic government during the US withdrawal and allowed the Taliban to resume control.

The case of Afghanistan is exemplary because this fragile state had the characteristics of both a post-conflict and a divided society. The long-term conflict in the country had significantly traumatized the people and depleted the resources and infrastructure of the state. It is important that the government took a comprehensive approach to the issue of post-conflict restoration and tried to provide localities with all the necessary resources for democratic development through a variety of public services. And the strengthening of authority was initially expected as a logical output of the NSP. This once again proves how important it is for the governments of fragile states to provide relevant services to their citizens to gain their legitimacy. But at the same time, this case shows that failure to implement service delivery programs can lead to a complete loss of legitimacy.

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[35] McCullough, Aoife, and Gemma Hennessey, Reconstructing Our Understanding of the Link between Services and State Legitimacy, n.d., 48.

Chapter IV. Methodology. Research objectives and question

Methodology

Before examining how Ukraine seeks to maintain legitimacy through e-government platforms, it is important to lay out the methodology that will be employed in the analysis. This chapter will briefly discuss the method chosen, how the interviews were conducted, and summarize the central research question, laying the groundwork for the analysis in Chapter V.

Methodological approach

This work is built exclusively on qualitative methods. The theoretical conceptualization and literature review elucidate key concepts and demonstrate the cases of fragile states and their experience in maintaining legitimacy through the provision of public services. Since Ukraine is the first fragile state in the world with such a developed structure of electronic platforms, there are no other comparable examples that would demonstrate a similar background. The cases of Iraq and Afghanistan rather demonstrate the common importance of providing services for the legitimization of the state. But it is important to apply empirical-analytical methods to explore the uniqueness of the Ukrainian case. The interview method was chosen for data collection, as it collects specific experiences of people, which can then be analyzed.

Interviews

The interviewees for this work were 8 Ukrainian women of the age from 22 to 46 years old who had to become displaced persons within Ukraine and abroad. Since men between the ages of 18 and 60 are prohibited from leaving the territory of Ukraine, almost all refugees who arrive in the European Union are women. Thus, all the respondents that could be found are women. It was important that the respondents knew about the Diia application and had at least some experience using it. And everyone interviewed has used Diia to a greater or lesser extent in their daily lives before and after the outbreak of the war. One woman who evacuated from Kyiv to the Chernivtsi region, the only internally displaced person, was interviewed via Zoom. All other participants gave interviews in person. Two of these women live in a suburb of Munich, Germany. They were evacuated from the Volnovakha district of the Donetsk region after several weeks of shelling in connection with the fighting that took place in their village. The remaining five women were evacuated to Vienna from the Dnipro, Kyiv, and Odesa because of the active shelling of their cities. All of them agreed to talk about their experience of using the Diia in Ukraine and during the evacuation and stay in the new places of residence.

All these interviews were doxastic, taken in a form of experience sharing.[36] The focus was on the experiences of the participants, without including the personal opinion of the interviewer. The interviews were semi-structured as all the main questions were prepared in advance, but a number of questions also came up during the interviews. The opening part of the interview included questions about participants' backgrounds, evacuation experiences, and other general information. The main part of the interview focused specifically on the experience of using the Diia app and personal attitude of the interviewees before and during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, more precisely, before and when being displaced.

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[36] For more on types of qualitative interviews, see Brinkmann, Svend and Kvale, Steinar (2015) InterViews. Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing. 3rd Edition. London: Sage.

Research objectives

The objective of this work is to explore the following developments: how Ukraine adjusted its Diia e-government platform to wartime realities; how the patterns of using this platform have changed among Ukrainians who were forced to move from their native places; how e-services help Ukrainians maintain connection with their state even when being displaced and believe in its effectiveness and efficiency in the realities of war.

Research question

The thesis investigates the following question: How does the Diia e-government platform affect the perception of displaced Ukrainians of their state and help Ukraine maintain its legitimacy?

Hypothesis

My initial hypothesis is that Diia provides useful public services that can satisfy important material needs of the population of Ukraine in times of crisis and thereby maintain satisfaction with the state. My positive expectation is that the effective operation of the electronic state platform can maintain the faith of Ukrainians in their state and thus maintains its legitimacy.

Chapter V. Analysis

After laying out the ways in which governments seek to increase legitimacy, as well as the method that will be used in the analysis, this thesis now turns to an empirical discussion of Ukraine and its use of the Diia application. The first half of the chapter analyzes the new functions of Diia, which appeared after the outbreak of hostilities in February 2022, and the second part, through interviews, explores the experience of Ukrainians using the application, and their impressions of it, in the conditions of wartime and evacuation.

Development of Diia services during wartime

Within a few weeks of the start of the invasion, the Ministry of Digital Transformation developed a special ID that serves to identify citizens in wartime, when paper documents are not available, even if the user had not previously uploaded any documents to Diia. As early as March 11, eDocument was available on Diia mobile app.[37] Many Ukrainians had to evacuate to safer regions of Ukraine, but not all of them took their documents with them that would allow them to cross checkpoints manned by the police or territorial defense fighters. Diia's eDocument has become a timely and effective e-solution to facilitate the evacuation of millions of Ukrainians. According to the Minister of Digital Transformation Mykhailo Fedorov, as of May 25, 2022, 17.3 million people use Diia.[38] This represents the number of users who received this new ID automatically in their mobile applications, regardless of what e-documents they had had before.

With growing numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs), the IDP certificate has also become a very important electronic document for many Ukrainians.[39] The certificate is given to a person who left the temporarily occupied territory to avoid the negative consequences of armed conflict and widespread violence, as well as those who moved from the territory of the administrative-territorial unit where hostilities are taking place. This status not only proves that the person is internally displaced, but also makes it possible to receive monthly financial assistance in the sum of UAH 2000 (roughly EUR 60).

Additionally, in March, people from regions affected by hostilities could apply for one-time financial assistance in the amount of UAH 6,500 (around EUR 200).[40] Quick organization of the support program was made possible due to the already existing eAid program, through which Ukrainians received payments for COVID-19 vaccination. This app has made it possible to receive assistance in connection with the loss of income or economic activity due to hostilities in Ukraine. Beginning on March 22, people receive their payments to special bank accounts that banks opened online to simplify the process of obtaining assistance. According to the report of the Prime Minister

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[37] Ministry and Committee of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, The eDocument will appear in Diia, accessed on March 23, URL: https://thedigital.gov.ua/news/u-dii-zyavitsya-edokument

[38] UKRINFORM, Today, the number of users of Diia is 17.3 million people, accessed on May 29, URL: https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-technology/3490961-vze-ponad-173-miljona-ukrainciv-koristuutsa-dieu.html

[39] Diia, Internally displaced person status and IDP certificate, URL: https://guide.diia.gov.ua/view/vydacha-dovidky-pro-vziattia-na-oblik-vnutrishno-peremishchenoi-osoby-e0d66712-cab9-43a2-8f11-2daa4b395bc6

[40] Diia, eAid / Support in the sum of 6500 hryvnias / Payment due to war, URL: https://guide.diia.gov.ua/view/nadannia-dopomohy-v-ramkakh-prohramy-iepidtrymka-u-zviazku-iz-vtratoiu-chastyny-zarobitnoi-platy-dokhodu-robota-ekonomichna-diia

of Ukraine, Denis Shmygal, about 5 million Ukrainians have applied for financial assistance through the eAid program.[41]

Due to the huge destruction that remains in the cities of Ukraine after the fighting and bombing, many Ukrainians are left without a home. The Ukrainian state has assured citizens that all houses will be restored or rebuilt after the end of hostilities. To do this, residents of Ukraine need to report what happened and request help with restoration. Despite the fact that the Russian invasion continues, and many destroyed cities do not remain under Ukrainian control, the government has already announced the acceptance of reports on the destruction. For this purpose, the Damaged Property section was launched in Diia.[42] Later, a special damage assessment commission will assess the amount of compensation that the owners can expect to receive. Additionally, the compensation procedure itself is not yet known. However, according to the Head of Electronic Services Development within the Ministry of Digital Transformation Mstislav Banik:[43]

So far, 195,000 applications have been registered. This number accounts for 540,000 residents. This is a fairly large number of people who have lost their homes. But this is information that the Ministry of Information and local governments will continue to work with. It is very important that Diia becomes a tool for communication with people so that they can be contacted. Because many people are not yet in the settlements where their property is damaged.

The next useful addition was the United24 platform, where one can donate money for the pressing needs of Ukraine during the invasion.[44] It is available online for people from all over the world who would like to help Ukraine. All collected money is distributed in three main areas: defence and demining, medical aid, and reconstruction. The platform was also built into the Diia app so that Ukrainians can donate to their fellow countrymen quickly and easily. This government initiative also helps those who wish to help to avoid scams, by providing a simple and easy way to send money.

And finally, the government has also implemented Diia TV and Diia Radio. Under the conditions of occupation, residents of Ukraine in several southeastern regions lost the ability to watch Ukrainian television and listen to Ukrainian radio. Displaced persons who were forced to leave Ukraine remain cut off from Ukrainian radio and TV. Since information isolation poses a strong threat to communication between citizens and the state, the Ministry of Digital Transformation quickly addressed this challenge and made Ukrainian radio and television available through the Diia application.[45]

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[41] Mind.ua, About 5 million Ukrainians applied to eAid for UAH 6,500, accessed on May 25, URL: https://mind.ua/news/20239142-blizko-5-mln-ukrayinciv-zvernulisya-po-epidtrimku-za-6500-grn

[42] Diia, Damaged Property, URL: https://diia.gov.ua/services/poshkodzhene-majno

[43] LB.ua, Diia registered 195,000 claims of property damage due to the war, URL: https://lb.ua/society/2022/06/08/519371_dii_zareiestrovano_195_tis_zayav_shchodo.html

[44] United24, The initiative of the President of Ukraine, URL: https://u24.gov.ua

[45] Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, The Ministry of Digital Transformation launches radio in Action, URL: https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/mincifri-zapuskaye-radio-v-diyi

Interviews

The government can, of course, implement programs, but their use and success are far from guaranteed. In order to understand how this application is used, and how it impacts the perceptions citizens have towards their government, it is necessary to ask citizens about their usage of the service. In this section, the attitudes of the interviewees are presented and analyzed to demonstrate their usage of the application, and its impact on their perception of the state.

Using the app before wartime

Even before the outbreak of the Russian invasion in Ukraine in February 2022, Diia had already been used on a large scale. All respondents to a greater or lesser extent used the application in their daily lives. For example, one of the participants used it at work:

> *I needed Diya at work to verify my identity, and I also have vaccination certificates there.* (Respondent 2)[46]

Most often, electronic documents were used for traveling by car or plane within Ukraine:

> *I have never carried paper documents. When I drove a car, my driver's license, technical passport, ID - everything was in one application. Also, along with this, I had my covid-passport, which was quickly and easily checked everywhere. Once my sister even lost her paper passport before flying from Kyiv to Dnipro, and she was saved by her electronic passport in Diia which she used for that flight.* (Respondent 3)[47]

Also, many mention that they use electronic documents at the post offices. For instance:

> *I often used the certificate of having been recovered from COVID-19 and the ID at post offices*. (Respondent 4)[48]

Electronic documents are also accepted when purchasing goods that are allowed for certain age categories and often used for online purchases:

> *I have been using the app since the first days it was released. I use my ID to proof my age when buying alcohol and a covid certificate. When buying tickets, I always copy passport data from there and paste it into the required fields. This reduces the chance of making a mistake*. (Respondent 6)[49]

Using the app after the beginning of the invasion

It is important to note that many displaced people have lost contact with local administrations, deputies, organizations, and even neighbors and acquaintances. After evacuation, they can only

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[46] Interview 2. 08.05.2022
[47] Interview 3. 15.05.2022
[48] Interview 4. 27.05.2022
[49] Interview 6. 03.06.2022

communicate with the central authorities through online communication tools. One of the women from the Donetsk region reported the following:

> *I have lost everything: there is no region, no district, no village, no house. My house is now in the Saratov region. Volnovakha district of Donetsk region is renamed into Saratov region by occupiers. I have no one to turn to in the local authorities. But I could get 6,500 hryvnias of help through Diia. I also reported my damaged property. My house was destroyed, and a separatists' tank fell through the floor into the basement. And I'm very happy about it. I hope they all died there. And we will rebuild the house.*
> *While I was going to the neighboring region by foot to escape shelling in my village, a police car stopped in front of me. The policeman said to go further, but without stepping off the road, as all the fields were mined. He screamed to me: "Go. Just get there." I asked where he was going. And he said he was going for administration. We knew who we were voting for… They [local municipal administration] were the first ones who abandoned everyone.* (Respondent 2)[50]

Complete isolation from the region also causes problems with reporting damaged property. The second woman from that region reports:

> *I would report on the destruction of my house, but I don't have a photo. And there was no one left in the village who could say what is now with our houses.* (Respondent 1)[51]

Also, additional problems arise with those types of documents that are not automatically generated in the application. Displaced persons have to apply to administrative bodies in other regions, and there may not be a simplified procedure for them:

> *The administrative bodies themselves are less effective for displaced persons. We needed to get an ID for one of my children, since he turned 16, we no longer had an administrative office in our village that might issue it. We started this process already in Lviv. It is difficult to get a new ID without additional papers. We also needed to pay for services, but we had no money at all.* (Respondent 2)[52]

This situation is unique because it refers to a rare case when a citizen had no documents other than a birth certificate, and he turned 16 at a time when any administrative authorities were not available in his village. The Ministry of Digital Transformation has not developed a solution for this type of problem. Such cases cause stress for citizens, since it becomes difficult to get an ID after being displaced. This theoretically should undermine legitimacy as there is no effective provision of services, but overall, the respondent's attitude towards e-services remained positive, as Diia offers many other useful solutions. We can say that in this case there is no undermining of the legitimacy of the state, but such rare cases should be studied separately.

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[50] Interview 2. 08.05.2022

[51] Interview 1. 08.05.2022

[52] Interview 2. 08.05.2022

Changes in the using patterns of the electronic platform depend on individual cases. Someone reports a reduction in the use of Diia because some usual everyday reasons for its use disappear while they are outside Ukraine, but at the same time they still use innovations developed during the war:

> *I started using Diia less as I received a booster dose of the vaccine already in Austria and was given a local certificate. But I was able to get financial support and then transferred it to the needs of the army. I watched TV in Diia. This is very convenient, as children can watch cartoons that they understand.* (Respondent 7)[53]

> *I only received financial support and immediately transferred it to the needs of the army.* (Respondent 8)[54]

Many report using Diia more often compared to the peacetime because respondents have to verify their identity more often at checkpoints:

> *After the start of the war, I began to use Diia more actively, as I needed to confirm my identity at checkpoints when moving around Ukraine.*
> *I also received a one-time financial assistance of 6500 UAH. After evacuating to Vienna, I continue to use my COVID-19 certificate, it is accepted everywhere. From here, I also transferred donations to the needs of the Ukrainian army.* (Respondent 3)[55]

> *Since the beginning of the war, Diia is used more often, primarily at checkpoints since we passed many of them during the evacuation from Kyiv. I also applied for an internally displaced person status through Diia, which allowed me to receive financial assistance from the state.* (Respondent 4)[56]

Respondents' impressions of Diia

All respondents speak of Diia in a positive way and find the platform quick and useful:

> *I received financial assistance very quickly and was able to cash it out quickly here [in Germany].* (Respondent 2)[57]

> *My sister couldn't get her physical driver's license in time because the war broke out and she didn't have time and opportunity to pick it up. But on the same evening when she got it approved, she received her electronic driver's license in Diia automatically.* (Respondent 3)[58]

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[53] Interview 7. 09.06.2022
[54] Interview 8. 09.06.2022
[55] Interview 3. 15.05.2022
[56] Interview 4. 27.05.2022
[57] Interview 2. 08.05.2022
[58] Interview 3. 15.05.2022

It is very important to have electronic versions of documents, as people tend to forget documents when being in a hurry or lose something while running to the shelter or anywhere else. With Diia, I can access my most important documents from any smartphone without having to go anywhere. (Respondent 4)[59]

I believe that all services should be improved to this electronic format; any certificate should be available online in a few minutes, and without standing in queues. This is definitely useful and should be further implemented in all aspects of bureaucratic processes. (Respondent 5)[60]

Satisfaction with Diia demonstrates the high level of support for digital improvements in Ukraine. All Ukrainians interviewed support the development of electronic services, which means they are inclined to trust the state, as it develops the public services in their interests.

The connection between individual and the state

Interview participants' answers to the question of whether Diia helps them feel more connected to the state were diverse. One of the respondents did not correlate electronic services and the state at all and did not consider them the direct responsibility of the state. But most respondents say they feel a closer connection to Ukraine thanks to this e-platform:

I didn't think at all that all these services were directly from the state and that there is such a tight connection. I didn't think it this way. (Respondent 5)[61]

I am very glad that there are electronic services. I feel that the state supports me no matter what. (Respondent 4)[62]

I take part in public surveys in Diia so I can participate in the life of my country even from a distance. (Respondent 6)[63]

Services have become much more accessible (Respondent 7)[64]

Electronic services and faith in Ukraine

The last part of the interviews was usually the most emotional, as it is difficult for some refugees to talk about the successes and failures of Ukraine and how their faith in the state is formed in the conditions of hostilities and evacuation. Here it is important to note once again that different respondents have completely different understanding of the state in general terms. Not every respondent associates the state with its administrative structures and often thinks in terms of people or their native region. It can be clearly identified, however, that all respondents believe in Ukraine. The following comments will help reflect the diversity of views and sources of faith in Ukraine:

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[59] Interview 4. 27.05.2022

[60] Interview 5. 03.06.2022

[61][61] Interview 5. 03.06.2022

[62] Interview 4. 27.05.2022

[63] Interview 6. 03.06.2022

[64] Interview 7. 09.06.2022

I will return to Ukraine under any conditions. Even if my village is not there anymore, then I will go to another one. I believe in Ukraine. [After that she left and returned with the awards of her eldest son, who serves in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.] How can I not believe in Ukraine when I have three sons who are fighting for Ukraine right now? (Respondent 2)[65]

I have always believed in Ukraine, but Diia makes me feel proud, because we have invented such an effective way to provide electronic services. I am proud that in our country there are such great minds that made this possible. As long as they believe and invest their efforts in Ukraine, I want to believe in Ukraine too. (Respondent 3)[66]

Due to these innovative changes in Ukraine, I have a feeling that we are developing and moving towards Europe. (Respondent 5)[67]

I take pride in Ukraine. Now it is often said that not everything works in Ukraine, but everything can be done, while in Europe everything works, but not everything can be done. And Diia shows it perfectly. You can do almost everything with it, and if you can't, then you can contact support, and they will help you solve everything there.
The degree of cooperation with banks is especially inspiring, Diia identifies users through banks and easily transfers financial support to citizens' bank accounts associated with them, one can feel the effectiveness and coherence of the work of government agencies with the non-state sector. Is not it beautiful?
It is great that our specialists remain in Ukraine and develop the public services sector. They could go anywhere in the world and work in big and prestigious IT companies, but they choose to stay in Ukraine and work for its development.
I personally did not receive any financial assistance from the state since I was not entitled to it. But I see a lot of people who need it, and they get it. They don't have to go anywhere to do it. It makes life easier during the war. (Respondent 6)[68]

Despite the fact that there are many problems in Ukraine, such as corruption, such electronic services show that Ukraine has great potential for development and numerous opportunities. Thanks to this, I keep the faith in our country [although this word could be also translated as a state, the respondent expressed more sentiments to Ukraine as a native place rather than a state]. (Respondent 7)[69]

There are three striking impressions that these Ukrainians have. The first is pride in the human potential of Ukraine. They are generally happy to belong to a society that has many talented professionals who are able to create quality services. In this context, Diia has become a unifying factor. The second is progress. Ukrainians note the innovativeness of electronic services and see

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[65] Interview 2. 08.05.2022
[66] Interview 3. 15.05.2022
[67] Interview 5. 03.06.2022
[68] Interview 6. 03.06.2022
[69] Interview 7. 09.06.2022

their development as evidence of the evolution of the public sector, which also makes them proud. The third is comfort. They all note that Diia makes their life a little easier or more comfortable. All this proves that the application plays an important role in supporting the Ukrainian population during active hostilities, and in return supports the authority of the state.

Chapter VI. Conclusions

Exploring the changes in the electronic state systems in Ukraine that appeared in the context of the Russian invasion in 2022, and the reactions of Ukrainians to them, this thesis explored the individual's perception of the state and faith in it, reinforced by the success of the implementation of electronic state services. The results of the research confirmed the hypothesis and demonstrated that e-government platforms can be extremely practical in times of crisis and satisfy citizens' material needs with its services. This work also showed that there is a strong attachment to the symbolic image of the state, which proves the diffuse support for Ukraine. This attachment comes from several sources that are tightly connected. Among internal sources, it is important to note the general patriotism and commitment to certain places, people, or lifestyles. Among external sources, it is important to highlight financial and information support, security, and satisfaction of material needs. Both sources were able to converge in Diia, which, in wartime conditions, was not only able to address the challenges and provide vital functions and services (electronic documents, electronic resources, reporting and consultations), but also became a bridge to connect with the intangible elements of state pride (human potential, domestic innovative technologies). All these elements support state legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens of Ukraine.

This thesis includes a broad theoretical base built upon the definitions and reflections of the main theorists of the state. It helps us to put together an understanding of the state in the modern world and its attributes. Without defining Ukraine as a state that fits into the framework of the modern system of international relations, it would not be possible to demonstrate threats to the sovereignty of the country and prove the need to win legitimization from citizens to maintain state authority. In combination with the case studies of Iraq and Afghanistan, the theoretical section linked the legitimacy and the role of public services in maintaining the loyalty of citizens. This paved the way for the analysis of the case of Ukraine.

But at the same time, the thesis introduced a completely new perspective on the provision of public services, as it focused exclusively on electronic services, which was not previously considered in the context of fragile states that are trying to strengthen their positions in crisis situations. This was made possible due to the unique background of Ukraine, which is the only fragile state with a highly developed e-government system.

As this thesis demonstrated, the sphere of electronic services is not only being strengthened by the possibilities of our time, but also shows considerable flexibility in the forms and timeframes for the implementation of projects. Investment in high-quality electronic services not only simplifies the life of residents in peacetime but is also able to support the vital activity of the state in times of extreme crisis, including the invasion and occupation of parts of state territories. This work produces a transferable knowledge about individual's attachment to the state and opens up a wide field for future research, which would include work with other cases. The flexibility of working with this phenomenon lies in the fact that it is true not only for fragile states or crisis situations, but also for ordinary states in peacetime.

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