SOCIAL COHESION OF SOCIETY: SOCIO-CULTURAL PROJECTIONS

COESÃO SOCIAL DA SOCIEDADE: PROJEÇÕES SOCIOCULTURAIS

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Abstract

Our study focuses on the issue of sociocultural projections of social cohesion in society. The methodology involved a comprehensive application of theoretical methods, including analysis, synthesis, generalization, analogy, and theoretical modeling, as well as ontological and epistemological perspectives to identify sociocultural projections of social cohesion. Key principles underpinning the architecture of social cohesion during wartime were identified, including sociocultural integrity, homogeneity and heterogeneity, systemicity, the sociocultural orientation of social processes, the influence of natural and artificial sociocultural factors, and the intersubjectivity of sociocultural reality. A model of social cohesion in society has been constructed. The results of the study demonstrate that a sociocultural approach to social cohesion allows it to be defined as a state of dynamic unification of society to address pressing issues. It is shown that social cohesion, as a guiding idea for preserving statehood, unfolds amid profound transformations of the sociocultural foundations of societal life – both social and cultural. It is determined that social cohesion emerges as a result of actions within the sociocultural environment, as interactions and mutual influences among societal actors, both horizontally and vertically, are mediated by the sociocultural environment, while societal actors, in turn, influence the content of the sociocultural environment.

Resumo

Este estudo dedica-se à questão das projeções socioculturais da coesão social na sociedade. A metodologia envolveu a aplicação abrangente de métodos teóricos, incluindo análise, síntese, generalização, analogia e modelagem teórica, assim como perspectivas ontológicas e epistemológicas para identificar as projeções socioculturais da coesão social. Foram destacados os princípios fundamentais que sustentam a arquitetura da coesão social em tempos de guerra: integridade sociocultural, homogeneidade e heterogeneidade socioculturais, sistemicidade sociocultural, orientação sociocultural dos processos sociais, influências socioculturais naturais e artificiais, e intersubjetividade da realidade sociocultural. Um modelo de coesão social da sociedade foi construído. Os resultados mostram que a abordagem sociocultural permite definir a coesão social como um estado de união dinâmica da sociedade para enfrentar desafios atuais. Observa-se que a coesão social, como princípio orientador para a preservação do Estado, se desenvolve em meio a profundas transformações das bases socioculturais da vida social – tanto sociais quanto culturais. Constatou-se que a coesão social resulta das ações do ambiente sociocultural, já que as interações e influências mútuas entre os atores sociais, em planos horizontais e verticais, são mediadas pelo ambiente sociocultural, enquanto os próprios atores, por sua vez, influenciam o conteúdo desse ambiente.

1 INTRODUCTION

In times of threats and dangers, the psychological state and physical health of members of society deteriorate. Extremely challenging living conditions generate fear, anxiety, and confusion, reduce physical and psychological resilience, and complicate individuals' ability to construct their own life trajectories as well as to envision and shape the future of society.

For this reason, during wartime the state faces a complex set of psychological challenges, including adaptation to new living conditions and the maintenance of the population's psychological health, the development of psychological resilience, and the identification of effective means for coping with war-related traumatic experiences and healing from their consequences.

One of the key aspects of psychological work involves strengthening social cohesion at the societal level, within specific social groups and generations, as well as at the individual micro-level (as readiness or capacity for cohesion). Most importantly, this requires the development of psychological foundations for enhancing subjectivity and for constructing a shared development strategy among social actors aimed at fostering a unified sociocultural Ukrainian space and overall national cohesion.

Since the concept of "social cohesion" currently lacks a conceptually rigorous definition and is instead constructed on the basis of various types of political, economic, or social threats, the scholarly community at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has not reached a consensus on the pathways to achieving cohesion. On the one hand, this has hindered the operationalization of social cohesion – necessary for its measurement and for comparative analyses of integration and disintegration processes across different states. On the other hand, it has, conversely, contributed to the multidimensional expansion of theoretical approaches to the phenomenon (Sharon, 2000; Battaini-Dragoni, Dominionithe, 2003; Chan *et al.*, 2006; Jenson, 2010; Novy *et al.*, 2012; Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017; Delhey *et al.*, 2018; Moustakas, 2023; Social Cohesion Concept and Measurement, 2023; Aruqaj, 2023).

The study of of interdisciplinary approaches to understanding social cohesion makes it possible to demonstrate that, in times of peace, this concept is actively employed within the political sphere of states. Based on theoretical frameworks of social cohesion, societal development strategies are formulated, and social cohesion is incorporated into public policy as a tool and mechanism for economic development, support of the social sector, and the обеспечения of protection and security. At the same time, issues of social cohesion during wartime remain insufficiently addressed in both scientific conceptualizations and political strategies. This gap provides grounds for constructing a coherent system of views and representations of social cohesion necessary to ensure the consolidation of societal efforts in addressing pressing social contradictions and challenges, as well as to optimize interaction between citizens and governmental institutions.

The concept of social cohesion is complex to study, as it possesses a multifaceted structure, lacks clear boundaries, and requires a comprehensive approach to uncover its meaning. At the same time, attempts to specify the foundations for constructing a concept of social cohesion – aligned with contemporary scientific knowledge, to formulate theoretical propositions that clarify its understanding, and to select an appropriate methodology for the effective collection and subsequent analysis of data – have raised an ever-increasing number of questions regarding the psychological nature of the phenomenon and its significance for society in the context of risks and threats to national security. Among the questions raised were the following:

- What mediates the effectiveness of communication between social actors, especially in times of threat – shared goals and values, mutual belief and trust, or a formed and conscious national, social, and territorial identity?
- Does the cohesion of society depend on shared experience or historical memory? How do social ties – crucial for survival and social development – change under complex conditions, and what qualitative transformations occur in society as a result of social cohesion?
- How do national culture, traditions, and religion affect citizens' resilience under trials? Are there behavioral models that support social order, stability, and identity and that facilitate societal cohesion during extremely challenging times?

The aim of our study is to identify the sociocultural projections of social cohesion. To construct a system of representations of social cohesion, the following objectives were set:

1. To synthesize theoretical and empirical data on the multidimensional phenomenon of social cohesion.
2. To specify the sociocultural framework for the construction of a model of social cohesion applicable to the analysis of contemporary society in wartime conditions.
3. To operationalize the dimensions and construct a model of social cohesion.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In the political discourse of the World Bank, it is emphasized that key tasks for societies include overcoming territorial limitations; ensuring opportunities for self-realization for all people (not only citizens of specific states); developing and implementing mechanisms for conflict resolution and prevention; preventing marginalization; enhancing social mobility; supporting citizens' trust in state institutions; fostering readiness for cooperation; and promoting political, economic, and social unity (Chatterjee *et al.,* 2023; Kim *et al.,* 2020; Norton & de Haan, 2013). Social cohesion is considered to be:

- "the glue" that unites people across different groups (shared goals, mutual trust among individuals and towards the state, readiness for cooperation between citizens and the state, etc.);
- a means of expanding opportunities for all individuals to shape their own future and maintain an active civic position;
- support for the resilience of communities, social groups, and individual citizens, as well as their engagement in societal development, regardless of geographical location, income, race, gender, ethnic background, health status, religion, or sexual orientation (implemented through socio-economic support in addressing social problems);
- a process that mediates the functioning of social structures (Chatterjee *et* al., 2023; Kim *et al.,* 2020; Ritzen *et al.,* 2000).

Jenson (2010) considered social cohesion as the foundation of collective identity and a sense of belonging, emphasizing its role in preventing marginalization and

promoting equal opportunities within society. According to Jenson, social cohesion encompasses multiple dimensions, including belonging versus isolation, inclusion versus exclusion, active participation versus non-involvement, recognition versus rejection, and the legitimacy versus illegitimacy of social structures and practices.

The typology of social cohesion dimensions proposed by Jenson (2010) was further developed by Bernard (1999). Bernard critically examined both the external and internal aspects of Jenson's five-dimensional model, arguing that aspects of social order are more diverse and only partially represented in Jenson's framework. Bernard (1999) suggested analyzing the nature of relationships within society across three domains of social activity: political, economic, and sociocultural. According to Bernard, social cohesion in the political domain refers to citizens' political engagement and their recognition of legitimate state institutions; social cohesion in the economic domain (particularly in the sphere of labor) reflects inclusion in societal relations, serving as an indicator of equality and social justice; and social cohesion in the sociocultural domain entails recognition of the right to difference, demonstrating the existence of a "dialogue of values" and indicating a sense of belonging to society.

Kearns and Forrest (2000) argued that social cohesion manifests at three spatial levels – interurban, city and regional, and neighborhood – across five dimensions: shared values and civic culture; social order and social control; solidarity and the reduction of material inequalities; social networks and social capital; and territorial belonging and identity. It should be noted that Kearns and Forrest introduced the dimensions of social networks and social capital into the set of social cohesion dimensions proposed by the scholarly community.

According to the analysis of theoretical sources (Dahrendorf, 1996; Berger-Schmitt, 2002; Concerted development of social cohesion indicators. Method o logical guide, 2005; Hulse, Stone, 2007; Jenson, 2010; Portes, Vickstrom, 2011; Berger-Schmitt *et al.*, 2016; Fonseca *et al.*, 2019; Nowack, Schoderer, 2020; Mac Fadden *et al.*, 2021; Dovhan, 2023; Social Cohesion Concept and Measurement, 2023; Aruqaj, 2023; Dovhan, 2024), the construct of social cohesion consists of three fundamental components:

- social ties (vertical ties between the state and society, and horizontal ties within civil society);

- sense of belonging and shared values (the engagement of communities in addressing state issues, consideration of citizens' values, provision of equal opportunities, etc.);
- collective collaboration (citizens' readiness for cooperation and collective responsibility for the future).

Chan et al. (2006) argued that social capital primarily focuses on individual and group levels (within networks), whereas cohesion, as a social phenomenon, has a more holistic character and relates mainly to the overall state of society. Chan et al. (2006) proposed a "Two-by-Two" measurement system for social cohesion, which includes: 1) the horizontal dimension of social cohesion – characteristics of relationships among different individuals and groups within society; 2) the vertical dimension of social cohesion – relationships between the state and its citizens (or civil society); 3) the subjective component – built on trust, a sense of belonging, and readiness to cooperate and help; and 4) the objective component – actual cooperation and participation of citizens in social life.

Dickes and Valentova (2012) defined social cohesion as a multidimensional construct that, on the one hand, measures social ties within the political and sociocultural spheres of life, and, on the other hand, encompasses subjective perceptions (attitudes) as well as outcomes of actions (engagement) (Dickes & Valentova, 2012). In their framework, the authors argued that the four dimensions of social cohesion result from the interaction of two axes: 1) spheres of life (political, sociocultural) and 2) indicators of social relations (formal/normative and substantive/behavioral). The validity of this multidimensional construct and the conceptual propositions were tested in a study of social cohesion across 47 European countries with varying socio-economic conditions and cultural characteristics (Dickes & Valentova, 2012).

Schiefer and Van der Noll (2017) argue that there are indeed fundamental indicators pointing to universal contextual dimensions of cohesion: 1) social relations, 2) identification with a geographic unit, and 3) orientation toward the common good.

Thus, considering the content and dimensions of social cohesion as presented in academic and political discourses at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it can be argued that, on the one hand, social cohesion serves as a tool and instrument employed in political strategies to address economic development, the social sector, and issues of protection and security. On the other hand, it represents a "hybrid" political

"quasi-concept", constructed on the basis of contextual data analysis and the assessment of societal conditions, the measurement of which remains inherently uncertain.

The theoretical analysis of academic and political discourses on the concept of social cohesion allows us to assert that the dimensions of social cohesion identified in most approaches should not be regarded as inherent universal components, since the strategic goal of societal cohesion is implemented according to contextual conditions and to address various pressing issues.

3 METHODS

In this study, the following theoretical methods were applied to identify the sociocultural projections of social cohesion: analysis, synthesis, analogy, generalization, and theoretical modeling.

From an ontological perspective, we examined the nature of societal existence, its fundamental properties, and its state and capacity for change aimed at optimizing life, particularly within the context of wartime realities. Our focus was on: 1) sociocultural achievements and experiences of interactions among social actors at both international and domestic levels; 2) the agency of societal actors who can initiate or halt changes in the life of the state; and 3) patterns of societal action under threats and risks, as well as strategies shaped by cultural specificity and contextual conditions. Studying societal life from an ontological perspective provides tools for understanding whether the conditions exist for population cohesion during times of risk and danger.

From an epistemological perspective, we analyzed knowledge regarding the sociocultural characteristics of society and the understanding of the nature of cohesion among Ukrainians. Specifically, we examined whether social cohesion is derived from sociocultural experience and the psychological traumas of past generations, as reflected in shared meanings and perceptions of reality, or, conversely, whether social cohesion represents a manifestation of societal adaptation to wartime realities and existing threats. In this view, cohesion is seen as a dynamic unification of citizens into social formations with temporal and spatial limitations, a contextually determined process of (self-)organization within society under conditions of risk and threat (Hornostai, 2023).

4 RESULTS

Given the broad spectrum of relevant information required to form a coherent system of perspectives on the studied concept, we concluded that in constructing the architecture of social cohesion during wartime, the cultural and social specificity of the state and society must be taken into account. The study of the formation and disruption of cohesion is therefore most appropriately conducted within a sociocultural approach. First, in this methodological framework, the dynamic categories of "culture" and "social" are considered integral components, shaped by human activity and revealing the particularities of sociocultural transformation processes, as well as the systems of values and norms that determine the state and behavior of individuals and communities. Second, the sociocultural approach maintains focus on both the individual and society as a whole, emphasizing the interconnections between people of a given culture, transmitted across generations, alongside the state, viewed as an institution formed and developed within the context of culture and social relations. Third, the sociocultural methodology aims to foster an understanding of how social and cultural factors influence societal functioning, how people adjust relationships, and how they initiate changes in the connections between society and various institutions. Fourth, the consistent application of the methods and principles of the sociocultural approach supports objective research of multifaceted social and cultural factors affecting societal cohesion and facilitates the acquisition of reliable knowledge.

Furthermore, the sociocultural approach to constructing social cohesion involves not only general scientific epistemological foundations but also the philosophical premises of sociocultural analysis. This enables an accurate understanding of the state of social cohesion during wartime, clarifies the essence of societal conditions, and allows for a more precise identification of branches of sociocultural change congruent with the historical context. Based on the above, we present the key principles underlying the construction of the architecture of social cohesion during war.

- *Principle of sociocultural integrity:* In society, all its elements are interconnected, influencing and interacting with each other as components of a single inseparable whole. Accordingly, human actions, as those of sociocultural beings, are part of the actions of social actors and society as a whole. This implies that the actions of each individual in society are meaningful for all subjects of interaction: a person

shapes themselves and the world around them, is influenced by sociocultural factors, and impacts their environment. Individuals interact within the framework of socially accepted norms, values, and traditions, adjust them according to the current context, and utilize them in self-construction and social interaction.

- *Principle of sociocultural homogeneity and heterogeneity:* Society is constructed on the basis of a combination of homogeneous and heterogeneous forms of sociocultural life, which, through overcoming significant differences, universalize the system of coexistence within a single sociocultural space. Sociocultural homogeneity is manifested in the relative uniformity among members of society with respect to certain characteristics, such as culture, language, religion, ethnic background, social status, and so on. In contrast, heterogeneity reflects the presence of significant differences among members of society in these same characteristics. Cultural similarity and diversity among members of society can foster cohesion, promote cultural diversity, drive innovation, and support social progress; however, they can also generate tension and conflict, potentially undermining societal integrity.

- *Principle of sociocultural systemicity:* Social elements – such as language, religion, and art – are components of a sociocultural system; they are interconnected and do not exist in isolation. The sociocultural system can be examined at multiple levels, which, in turn, interact with one another. At the macro level, large social formations (society as a whole and its institutions) and social processes (integration/disintegration, polarization, etc.) are considered, along with patterns of social change and cultural transformation. At the meso level, social groups, communities, collectives, and other social formations are analyzed, including their organization, interactions, values, and traditions. At the micro level, individual formal and informal interactions among citizens are represented – formal interactions are regulated by explicit rules, instructions, or organizational frameworks, while informal interactions arise spontaneously, based on shared interests and values (e.g., family, kinship, friends, etc.). The principle of sociocultural systemicity posits that individual elements operate across these levels and exert a complex influence on the state of society as a whole.

- *Principle of the sociocultural orientation of social processes:* A social process is a phenomenon shaped by culture and social structures. Complex and multifaceted

social processes may reflect an overall direction in which social interactions develop, or they may move in multiple directions. The multidirectionality of social processes indicates that processes can occur simultaneously, leading to changes across various spheres of life. For example, economic development may be accompanied by increasing social inequality, and technological progress can result, among other outcomes, in unemployment among certain segments of the population. The reciprocal nature of social processes suggests that each process influencing societal dynamics may reverse its direction (for instance, democratization and liberalization may contrast with authoritarianism and despotism, while globalization and integration may be polarized by deglobalization, separation, or disintegration). Additionally, there is variability in the development of reality, wherein a given process can shift its trajectory (e.g., integration may transform into disintegration, polarization into unification, etc.).

- *Principle of sociocultural natural and artificial influences:* The states and processes prevailing in society can originate from natural sources (self-determined by citizens) or artificial sources (controlled by "external influences," such as social actors, culture, the economy, politics, and technology). Self-determination implies that actors are motivated toward specific actions; in contrast, manipulation involves purposeful, subtle influences aimed at changing views, opinions, beliefs, or behaviors to induce a particular state or process. Sociocultural influences interact with each other and shape both the state of individuals and the state of society, guiding the course of processes in which social actors are engaged.

- *Principle of intersubjectivity of sociocultural reality:* All social actors have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and experience. As a result of acquiring knowledge and experience, social actors unify shared contextual meanings according to their intentionality. This implies that actors perceive and understand sociocultural reality through the lens of their own experience – the understanding of the "cultural" and the "social" – which is not static, but expands, is reinterpreted, and remains dynamic and flexible. Therefore, sociocultural reality, as the outcome of the combination of knowledge and experience of active social actors, exists intersubjectively – in the current knowledge and experience of contemporaries.

In our view, social cohesion under conditions of threats to national security is a state of society in which actors dynamically unite into social formations and interact according to contextual requirements, manifesting a directed effort to achieve consensus in addressing pressing issues.

In the proposed definition of social cohesion, the concept of "dynamic unification" implies society's adaptation to environmental demands through the aggregation of individual citizens, groups, and institutions to perform joint actions, both in the vertical dimension (state and society) and the horizontal dimension (within society). Unlike stable unification, which has a long-term perspective, the dynamic unification of actors reflects their orientation toward constructive interaction and their ability to function under continuously changing conditions (societal adaptability). The result of this unification is a set of social formations established on the basis of social connections. It should be noted that social formations may be created for the duration of specific tasks, to achieve particular goals (citizen adaptability), and may remain effective beyond that period.

Regarding actors' sensitivity to "contextual requirements" under conditions of threats to national security, it should be noted that, in psychological terms, the concept of "context" refers, on the one hand, to environmental conditions that mediate people's states and their responses to external influences. On the other hand, context is a processual phenomenon reflecting the sociocultural reality of a specific spatiotemporal framework – it objectifies phenomena, represents the social situation and cultural specificity of society, and explains the foundations of human behavior within the continuum of the past and the present.

The presented conceptualization is based on the understanding of society as a dynamic system that, on the one hand, changes according to contextual conditions, and on the other hand, constructs conditions within a changing world. The variability and mutability of the social system lead to the systematic adjustment of existing norms and rules and the formation of variations in the unfolding of the future. At the same time, the inherent social heterogeneity of the population (in terms of material, linguistic, cultural, religious, national, political, and other characteristics) can, on the one hand, be considered a sign of a self-sufficient social system, and on the other hand, indicate the need to consider factors of societal polarization and processes of integration/disintegration in the study of any social phenomenon. This is why the characteristics of citizen cohesion during wartime and peacetime are appropriately outlined based on social projections (horizontal

and vertical), which reflect the current state of society under any contextual conditions, as well as the features of interactions and social characteristics (qualities and advantages) of its actors within their reality—both subjective and objective (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Model of Social Cohesion Projections of Society under Conditions of Threats to National Security

	Projection of subjective reality		Projection of objective reality	
Horizontal projection (sociocultural interaction within society)	**Socio-psychological aspect of (self-)organization of social interactions:** • Positional level • Institutional level **Cultural-psychological aspect of (self-)organization of social interactions**		**Socio-psychological aspect of (self)organization of social interactions:** • Positional level • Institutional level **Cultural-psychological aspect of (self)organization of social interactions**	**Horizontal projection** (sociocultural interaction within society)
Vertical projection (sociocultural interaction of the state and society)	**Socio-psychological aspect of the organization of social interactions:** • Positional level • Institutional level **Cultural-psychological aspect of the organization of social interactions**		**Socio-psychological aspect of the organization of social interactions:** • Positional level • Institutional level **Cultural-psychological aspect of the organization of social interactions**	**Vertical projection** (state and society)
	Projection of subjective reality		Projection of objective reality	

In our view, *the **vertical projection of social cohesion*** represents the organization of interactions between the state and Ukrainian society, which is mediated:

1. Externally, through interstate connections (among mega-actors and macro-actors of contemporary Europe, with which Ukraine is engaged) in addressing strategic tasks of social and economic development, protection, and security;

2. Internally, through domestic state connections (between government structures and societal actors) aimed at ensuring well-being in peacetime and preserving statehood in times of geopolitical threats.

In *the **horizontal projection of social cohesion***, the process of (self-)organization of social interactions by societal actors is examined.

*Within the **subjective reality***, socio-psychological interpretations by social actors of their interactions with "others" are situated (e.g., trust, responsibility, identification with the national community, etc.). This reflects experiences associated with visions of the future, goal orientations, attitudes, and self-determination of each individual citizen.

Objective reality reveals the characteristics of population life under conditions of threats to national security (supportive behavior, social integration and solidarity, etc.).

*The **positional level*** presents the socio-psychological characteristics of actors' positioning within the horizontal and vertical projections, which are manifested in interactions, social ties, and social identity. The study of social positions within a specific sociocultural space involves the collection of the following data:

- On interactions and mutual influences of actors on each other in times of risks and threats;
- On social ties within the systems "people – social groups" and "society – state," which are important for understanding the functioning of the social system and society as a whole;
- On social identities, which indicate awareness of belonging to certain social groups and communities, and directly relate to national identity, formed under the influence of culture, history, traditions, education, and other factors, which, in our view, serves as a foundation for societal cohesion.

The institutional level covers the characteristics of institutional and extra-institutional processes in society under specific conditions. The importance of addressing these tasks is explained by the fact that the unfolding of these processes is reflected in the practices of societal actors: social ties continuously change – informal interactions transform into formalized ones (are institutionalized), or, in the event of their disruption, the functions of formal institutions are replaced by spontaneous actions, strengthening informal networks and horizontal connections.

In the context of studying social cohesion during wartime, this may involve examining the following issues:

- Actions aimed at societal cohesion, regulated according to generally accepted psychological rules, norms, traditions, and behavioral patterns in society, which influence interpersonal interactions and ensure coordination of actions to achieve common goals within specific volunteer groups, professional/self-organized communities, initiative groups, etc.;
- Psychological methods of influencing societal actors aimed at cohesion (e.g., socio-psychological management methods such as moral encouragement, persuasion, modeling, emotional contagion, as well as methods of manipulation, suggestion, etc.);

- The course of processes such as societal polarization, (dis)integration, adaptation of citizens to contextual conditions, self-regulation, and solidarization, which reveal the features of how society experiences a particular contextual period.

As *units of analysis for the socio-psychological aspect*, the following can be considered:

1. *Social characteristics* that describe the properties and features of actors' social positions – their social identities; social roles; social adaptability; tolerance; and other relevant traits.

2. *Dynamic elements of the social system* – social groups and communities; processes such as societal polarization, (dis)integration, adaptation, solidarization, etc.; cohesion-related actions; social ties; interactions and mutual influences among individuals, groups, and other social formations

The *cultural-psychological aspect* highlights stable individual-psychological characteristics shaped by culture and the social environment: beliefs, convictions, values, norms, traditions, and behavioral patterns typical of members of a particular nation; meanings formed under the influence of historical experience, etc. To explore how the socio-cultural environment mediates social cohesion in society, it is important to highlight the following psychological indicators of individual citizens:

- *Values, beliefs, and attitudes* formed within the cultural environment that guide behavior both at the individual level and at the societal level;

- *Psychological cultural norms*, which represent generally accepted expectations regarding behavior, thinking, and emotions considered acceptable or desirable from a psychological standpoint within a given society;

- *Psychological meanings regarding social cohesion*, which are mediated by cultural and national traditions (according to established worldviews, values, beliefs, and appropriate behavior in times of war).

The listed cultural achievements of society are considered *socio-cultural formations*. As units of analysis, the following indicators can be used:

- *Psychological symbolic artifacts*, which influence decision-making and hold deep symbolic significance for culture, history, and religion. These artifacts form the basis for understanding and perceiving reality and determine ways of adapting to it: national ideas and meanings that can be borrowed or imitated from others; cultural systems of psychological interaction (norms, values, knowledge, rules of

interaction, and communication patterns characteristic of a given culture; attitudes toward others, etc.);

- *Psychological operative artifacts*, which represent the non-material aspects of societal life, primarily moral beliefs and attitudes, value orientations, and other guiding principles formed under the influence of the cultural environment.

5 DISCUSSION

In the construction of the model of social cohesion of society under conditions of national security threats, there are parallels with Chan et al. (2006) "Measuring Social Cohesion: Two-by-Two Scheme". However, its substantive content is expanded based on two aspects of the socio-cultural approach.

The first aspect is the *socio-psychological aspect of social cohesion*, which reveals generally accepted institutional forms of social life in society as well as non-institutional (positional) dimensions of social relations, analyzed from both positional and institutional levels.

The second aspect is the *cultural-psychological aspect of social cohesion*, which highlights features of the cultural environment that have developed within specific socio-cultural conditions.

In the social cohesion model, our focus is specifically on *(non-)institutional issues*.

On the one hand, we consider a social institution, as a stable complex of formal and informal social ties, attitudes, principles, norms, and rules, to be one of the factors shaping the social system. At the same time, *institutionalization* is a continuous process aimed at consolidating socially necessary changes that are contextually relevant and approved by society – changes that ensure the existence and development of the state.

During institutionalization, social institutions are formed that provide stability and functioning of society, consolidate certain rules and norms of life, and – most importantly – contribute to the formation of *national identity*. This involves citizens constructing their own sense of belonging to a given national community, its institutions, and the gradual institutionalization of social interactions that are essential for cohesion in times of threat.

From this perspective, social institutions and gradual institutionalization act as *agents influencing the formation of identities*, and accordingly, on the categorization of

others in the surrounding environment as "close" or "different." Therefore, during periods of threats to national security, it is crucial to understand the factors that influence this process and the conditions necessary for building societal unity and integration, in order to preserve national identity and strengthen social cohesion.

Secondly, it is essential to study how the *institutionalization of historical memory* unfolds and what constitutes the current image of the nation – whether citizens perceive themselves as a community of people united not only by a shared territory and economic ties, but also by unity and solidarity in collective political actions, as well as cultural traditions, values, and language.

Thirdly, it is necessary to consider the *meanings and social ties* that determine *identification with the national community*, including political ideas and cultural values that are perceived, shared, and articulated by the majority of the country's citizens (Stepyko, 2011).

Fourthly, it is important to identify ways to support *particularized forms of trust*, which strengthen interpersonal, group, and network ties (*horizontal projection*), as well as *generalized trust* – abstract confidence in public figures, governmental structures, social institutions, interstate and supranational organizations, volunteer organizations, and foundations (*vertical projection*).

In light of the above, we argue that the stability of social ties and the confidence in the integrity, honesty, and predictability of others' behavior, both at the level of individual actors and collective entities, becomes a key prerequisite for guiding society toward responsible decisions during challenging periods for the state. This orientation fosters a forward-looking perspective and the construction of a shared future.

On the other hand, it is also evident that the culture of a given society acts as a relay of its worldview and contextually effective practices of its actors. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that, in conditions of geopolitical threats and risks, culture serves as a contextually foundational constant for the functioning of society, since cultural meanings are constructed not only from lived experience but also on the basis of cultural-historical memory (Hornostai, 2023).

Consequently, in modeling social cohesion under threat conditions, it is crucial to rely on psychological historical artifacts – "condensed" experiences of the past, which, in new contexts, reveal knowledge about historical events. It is necessary to consider culture as an integral societal value, encompassing its material, socio-political, and spiritual

achievements. Finally, culture should be regarded as a means for realizing human potential in both material and spiritual domains. In other words, national cultural-psychological foundations – including the national idea, motives, spiritual and value orientations, and ideals – which, in stable conditions or during societal disruption, can serve as a psychological anchor, uniting people to achieve common societal goals.

6 CONCLUSION

Thus, it can be concluded that the socio-cultural approach to social cohesion allows it to be defined as a state of dynamic unification of society aimed at addressing current challenges. Social cohesion, as a guiding principle for the preservation of statehood, unfolds in conditions of profound transformation of the socio-cultural foundations of societal life, encompassing both social and cultural dimensions.

The boundaries of constructing social cohesion are considered to encompass the interrelated socio-psychological and cultural-psychological aspects. At the same time, understanding society as a dynamic, socially heterogeneous system, capable of changing under the influence of contextual conditions while simultaneously creating new social contexts, allows us to conclude that:

- the unfolding of institutional and non-institutional socio-cultural processes is flexible and contextually congruent;
- the state of society is the result of the manifestation of "external" social factors and "internal" cultural and psychological (non-)formal dimensions of the social system;
- the continuous readjustment of interactions between society and the state in both horizontal and vertical projections is one of the reasons for the instability of society's state, particularly that of social cohesion.

Finally, social cohesion can be considered the outcome of actions within the socio-cultural environment, as the interactions and mutual influences of societal actors in the horizontal and vertical planes are mediated by the socio-cultural environment, while societal actors, in turn, influence the content of that environment.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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