

ARTICLE

Erosion of state resilience as a challenge to internal security – proposal for analytical framework enabling the early identification of social and institutional threats

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to present the erosion of state resilience as a useful analytical category in the study of internal security and a proposal for a three-level analytical framework for monitoring signs of a weakening of the state's resilience before an overt crisis arises. The article is based on the analysis of the relevant literature, comparative analysis and model synthesis. The starting point is the assumption that modern states are relatively well-prepared to respond to crisis incidents, yet are less adept at identifying processes of long-term erosion affecting social, institutional and informational spheres. The final conclusion indicates that internal security requires not only the ability to respond but also a developed capacity to recognise erosional processes of strategic importance.

Keywords

state resilience, social capital, institutional trust, strategic analysis, disinformation

Introduction

Modern states develop comprehensive procedures for responding to violent incidents – terrorist attacks, disasters, critical infrastructure failures, pandemics or disturbances of a hybrid nature. From an institutional perspective this means the growing importance of crisis management, business continuity plans and inter-ministerial coordination instruments. However, this type of preparation does not imply a full capacity to recognise processes that are not one-off incidents, but they develop gradually, weakening the relationship between the society, public institutions and state information system¹. In the operational dimension of internal security, therefore, particular importance is attached not only to sudden threats but also to long-term erosive processes that diminish the state's capacity to absorb shocks (e.g. overburdening of the healthcare system, a sudden decline in institutional trust, interference with communication between the authorities and society), as well as adapt to changing conditions, and restore its operational effectiveness².

The subject of research is the erosion of state resilience viewed as an internal security issue. This term refers to the gradual erosion of the state's ability to maintain institutional order, coordinate the public response and sustain the public trust necessary for the authorities to function effectively. Seen in this light, resilience is not merely a characteristic of infrastructure or crisis procedures, but it also encompasses social factors, including the level of institutional trust, community cohesion, the legitimacy of institutions and the quality of communication between the authorities and society³. Therefore, internal security cannot be understood solely as the ability to neutralise a threat once it has been identified, but also as the ability to recognise the early signs of the weakening of state structures.

The research problem can be formulated as follows: what symptoms and indicators allow for the identification of erosion of state resilience before it manifests as an overt internal security crisis? The question arises from a disparity evident in the literature between extensive analyses of crisis response and the more limited body of work regarding the early identification of processes that undermine

¹ OECD, *Boosting Resilience through Innovative Risk Governance*, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2014/05/boosting-resilience-through-innovative-risk-governance_g1g3fd76/9789264209114-en.pdf, pp. 15–23 [accessed: 26 III 2026].

² C.S. Holling, *Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems*, “Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics” 1973, no. 4, pp. 14–18. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev.es.04.110173.000245>.

³ R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York 2000, pp. 19–28; F. Fukuyama, *Trust. The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, New York 1995, pp. 26–35.

the state's capacity for effective action⁴. From an analytical perspective, the aim is therefore to identify phenomena such as a decline in trust in institutions, public system overload, disruptions to coordination between public entities, and the rise of information chaos.

The aim of the article is to present the erosion of state resilience as a useful analytical category in the internal security research and to propose an analytical framework for identifying the early signs of erosion of state resilience in this area. The framework brings together different perspectives: social, institutional and informational, on the assumption that the weakening of the state is rarely one-dimensional. The article employs a review of the relevant literature, a comparative analysis of the experiences of two European states, and a conceptual/model synthesis aimed at organising the proposed indicators. This approach makes it possible to bring together the findings of the various fields of social sciences, including security studies, research into governance and institutional resilience⁵.

The article puts forward a hypothesis according to which the erosion of state resilience can be identified before an overt crisis occurs, provided that the internal security analysis covers not only isolated incidents but also the accumulation of vulnerabilities at the social, institutional and informational levels.

State resilience as an analytical category – from a crisis response to an adaptive capacity

The concept of resilience only entered the modern vocabulary of a security analysis at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, although its origins predate this and stem from research into the stability of complex systems. In Crawford S. Holling's classical interpretation, resilience does not simply denote a return to the original state, but rather the system's ability to absorb disturbances without losing its basic functions and structure⁶. Applying this definition to the field of security studies has made it possible to move away from an understanding of a crisis as a one-off disruption and to direct researchers' attention towards the question of why some systems become destabilised more quickly than others.

⁴ A. Boin et al., *The Politics of Crisis Management. Public Leadership under Pressure*, Cambridge 2017, pp. 3–12. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316339756>.

⁵ D.D. Woods, *Four Concepts for Resilience and the Implications for the Future of Resilience Engineering*, "Reliability Engineering & System Safety" 2015, vol. 141, pp. 5–9.

⁶ C.S. Holling, *Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems...*, pp. 1–23.

In the decades that followed, the term *resilience* came to be used in reference to organisations, infrastructure, public administration and political communities. In this context, resilience is no longer a category describing solely the system's durability, but has come to refer to its ability to adapt, regenerate and coordinate⁷. This was of particular significance for the analysis of the state as a security actor, as classical security models were based primarily on the categories of protection, control and response. The state was regarded as an entity whose role was to neutralise a threat once it had been identified, rather than a system whose ability to maintain its effectiveness might gradually diminish. Meanwhile, the modern security environment increasingly encompasses threats that are diffuse, long-lasting and ambiguous, and not those that take the form of a single incident⁸.

Incorporating the concept of resilience into the analysis of the state therefore represents a significant shift in perspective. It is no longer simply a question of whether institutions are able to respond to a threat, but also of whether they can maintain their ability to function under prolonged pressure, overload or a loss of public trust. In this sense, state resilience can be understood as the ability of public structures and the surrounding social environment to absorb shocks, adapt to changing conditions, and restore functional balance without any permanent loss of control⁹. Resilience, understood in this way, is significant not only for crisis management, but also for internal security as a whole, as it concerns both security institutions and, more broadly, the state's ability to maintain constitutional order, the continuity of public services and the social legitimacy of its actions.

The concepts of security and resilience are not the same. Security traditionally refers to the state of mitigating risks or the ability to neutralise them, while resilience describes the ability to continue operating despite disruptions. This means that the state may have significant formal security measures in place and at the same time it may demonstrate low resilience in a social sense – stemming from weak ties and trust – or in an institutional sense. It may also remain relatively resilient despite the presence of threats, provided it has a high capacity for adaptation and regeneration¹⁰. For internal security, the distinction between security and resilience is of fundamental importance, as it allows to grasp phenomena that do not fit

⁷ B. Walker, D. Salt, *Resilience Thinking. Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World*, Washington 2006, pp. 1–17.

⁸ OECD, *Boosting Resilience through Innovative Risk Governance*, Paris 2014, pp. 9–18; RAND Corporation, *Building Resilience to Systemic Risks. A Review of the Literature*, Santa Monica 2021, pp. 5–11.

⁹ D.D. Woods, *Four Concepts for Resilience...*

¹⁰ A. Wildavsky, *Searching for Safety*, New Brunswick–Oxford 1988, pp. 77–91.

into the simple 'threat – response – neutralisation' model, yet which, in practice, determine whether the state remains functional in times of tension.

From this perspective, the limitations of classical security models become particularly apparent. The models work well in the case of clearly identifiable, singular in character and operationally manageable threats, e.g. acts of violence such as an attack, failure or disturbance of public order. However, they find it much harder to cope with processes that are spread out over time, such as a decline in trust in institutions, the overburdening of public system, communication fragmentation (the division of the shared information-sharing space into multiple channels and groups of recipients) or the reduction in the public administration's capacity to coordinate actions. It is precisely this sort of phenomenon that can create an environment conducive to a crisis, before it manifests itself in the form of overt incident¹¹.

The state's resilience should therefore not be regarded as a concept that replaces security, but rather as an analytical category that complements and deepens it. This allows us to see both how the country responds to a crisis and the state it is in when it enters a period of tension, as well as whether it has sufficient adaptive capacity to maintain control and public trust¹².

Erosion of state resilience as a process difficult to recognise but strategically important

In the analysis of internal security, the concept of a crisis is typically associated with a recognisable event that clearly differs from the normal state and requires an extraordinary institutional response. Therefore, crisis typically is of a singular character – it manifests at a specific time, is described as a turning point, and triggers visible management mechanisms. However, the erosive process is of a different nature. It does not necessarily mean an immediate disruption of public order or produce clear-cut operational symptoms that would suggest the need to take action, but gradually undermines the state's ability to function effectively¹³. It is therefore not a crisis in itself, but a state of increasing vulnerability which may precede a crisis, exacerbate its effects, or hinder the restoration of normal functioning once it has occurred.

¹¹ A. Boin et al., *The Politics of Crisis Management...*, pp. 3–14; OECD, *Boosting Resilience...*, pp. 21–24.

¹² *Designing Resilience. Preparing for Extreme Events*, L. Comfort, A. Boin, C.C. Demchak (eds.), Pittsburgh 2010, pp. 1–12.

¹³ A. Boin et al., *The Politics of Crisis Management...*, pp. 3–18.

The difference between a crisis and an erosive process has analytical and practical significance. The crisis is capturing the attention of decision-makers because it is visible and may have clear political implications. However, the erosive process takes place below the threshold for an immediate response. Its dynamics are based on the accumulation of weaknesses which, taken individually, appear to have a limited impact, but which, taken together, alter the conditions under which the state operates¹⁴. The state does not suddenly cease to function – it simply begins to function in a less coherent, less predictable and less reliable manner. Overburdening administrative institutions may reduce the quality of decisions and lengthen response time, which in turn affects the public's perception of the effectiveness of state's actions. This hinders the implementation of measures requiring legitimacy and social discipline. At the same time, disruptions in the information sphere may undermine the state's ability to communicate its intentions and explain its actions¹⁵.

At a social level, the erosion of resilience is manifested primarily in a decline in public confidence in state's institutions, predictability of their actions and readiness to cooperate. Under stable conditions, the state can function effectively even with a moderate level of social tensions. However, when a disruption occurs, what matters is whether citizens consider the institutions' actions to be justified and appropriate. A long-term decline in trust in public institutions, rising social atomisation, and intensifying polarisation weaken the system's capacity to mobilise and coordinate collective actions¹⁶. This means that internal security depends not only on the formal capacity of the state apparatus but also on the quality of social ties and the level of institutional legitimacy.

At the institutional level, the process of erosion becomes apparent primarily through the overburdening of structures, a decline in coordination and an increasing diffusion of responsibility. Institutions may formally retain their full powers, but at the same time gradually lose their ability to act in a comprehensive, swift and consistent manner. In practice, this means an increase in the number of reactive measures at the expense of proactive ones, a reduction in planning capacity, and a weakening of cooperation between entities responsible for security, administration and communication between the authorities and the public¹⁷. Institutional erosion often takes the form of apparent efficiency – the system functions, but in an increasingly fragmented manner and with diminishing resilience to disruptions.

¹⁴ OECD, *Boosting Resilience...*, pp. 21–30.

¹⁵ D.D. Woods, *Four Concepts for Resilience...*

¹⁶ R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone...*, pp. 22–28; F. Fukuyama, *Trust. The Social Virtues...*, pp. 26–37.

¹⁷ *Designing Resilience...*, pp. 7–15.

The third dimension of an erosive process is information level. Contemporary state operates in an environment in which the ability to maintain order in communication between the authorities and the public becomes a feature of internal security. The erosion of informational resilience involves not only the presence of disinformation but also – more broadly – the growing interpretative chaos, the decline in the credibility of public discourse, and the loss of the common ground upon which the social and institutional decisions rest¹⁸. In such circumstances, even when the state authorities act correctly, their actions may be perceived as inconsistent and arbitrary, thereby increasing the risk of secondary destabilisation.

The erosion of resilience does not need to be equated with the ‘collapse’ of the state or with a dramatic breakdown of an order. It is, rather, a state of gradual reduction in adaptive capacity, which narrows the margin of institutional and social security. The earlier such a process is identified, the greater the chance of recovery of the efficiency¹⁹. For this reason, an analysis of internal security should – in addition to identifying events and incidents – also encompass symptoms of long-term weakening, which, while less spectacular, often hold greater strategic significance.

In this sense, the erosion of state resilience constitutes a particularly useful category for the analysis of internal security. For it makes it possible to capture phenomena that do not yet constitute a crisis but are no longer neutral for the functioning of the state. If security is to be understood as the ability not only to react but also to remain effective under pressure, then erosive processes should be included in the central field of analytical observation.

Social capital and institutional efficiency – foundations of state resilience

When assessing state resilience, one should not rely solely on organisational or infrastructural issues. A state is a system embedded in social relationships, standards of trust and models of cooperation. Social capital and institutional efficiency are two intertwined foundations of its resilience. The first one relates to the quality of social relationships and trust resources, while the second one concerns the ability of institutions to act in a predictable, effective and coordinated manner. With regard

¹⁸ RAND Corporation, *Truth Decay. An Initial Exploration of the Diminishing Role of Facts and Analysis in American Public Life*, Santa Monica 2018, pp. 1–13.

¹⁹ OECD, *Boosting Resilience...*, pp. 31–34; A. Boin et al., *The Politics of Crisis Management...*, pp. 25–29.

to the internal security, both these dimensions – though analytically independent – are interdependent in practice²⁰.

In traditional approaches, social capital was understood as a resource inherent in social relationships, norms of reciprocity and models of cooperation. Robert D. Putnam often linked it to the level of civic participation and engagement, trust and the capacity of communities to act collectively, pointing out that its erosion leads to a decline in the quality of democratic institutions and the effectiveness of public life²¹. In turn, Francis Fukuyama emphasised that social trust forms the basis for effective coordination within complex organisational and political structures, as it reduces transaction costs²², increases the predictability of the behaviour of all the parties involved in a relationship and enhances the willingness to cooperate beyond purely formal contacts²³. In the context of state security, trust is not merely a normative or moral category, but a strategic resource that influences the system's ability to respond and adapt.

Social trust is particularly important in the situations of tension, uncertainty and when institutions are overburdened. Under stable conditions, the state can base its operations to a greater extent on procedures and routines. In times of crisis or heightened pressure, however, the importance of social acceptance of public decisions, compliance with institutional instructions and cooperation with state authorities increase. Where trust in institutions is permanently undermined, even formally correct actions may be perceived as arbitrary, non-transparent or ineffective²⁴. Consequently, this reduces not only the effectiveness of crisis management, but also the state's overall resilience to social, informational and organisational disruptions.

Just as important as trust is social cohesion, understood as a society's ability to maintain a minimum level of normative and systemic integration (as defines by D. Lockwood's classic distinction between the social integration and the system

²⁰ OECD, *Government at a Glance 2023*, Paris 2023, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/06/government-at-a-glance-2023_da193b0d/3d5c5d31-en.pdf, pp. 17–24 [accessed: 26 III 2026].

²¹ According to Putnam, effectiveness of public life should be understood as the community's ability to resolve collective problems and coordinate collective action, as well as the responsiveness of institutions to citizens' needs. See: R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone...*, pp. 19–28.

²² The effect of reduced transaction costs is evident, for example, in a reduced need for detailed checks and verification of counterparties, shorter negotiation times, fewer legal disputes and a reduced need for formal safeguards (guarantees, complex contracts).

²³ F. Fukuyama, *Trust. The Social Virtues...*, pp. 26–37.

²⁴ M. Levi, L. Stoker, *Political Trust and Trustworthiness*, "Annual Review of Political Science" 2000, no. 3, pp. 475–507. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.3.1.475>.

integration) despite differences in interests, views and experiences²⁵. The state can, in fact, function effectively even in the presence of social conflicts, provided that the basic conditions for coexistence and common rules of conduct are maintained. However, when vertical and horizontal ties – between citizens and institutions and within society itself – become permanently weakened, the system's ability to respond in a coordinated manner to disruptions diminishes²⁶. From the perspective of internal security this means an increased vulnerability to communication chaos, polarisation and secondary conflicts surrounding the actions taken by a state.

Institutional efficiency remains an equally important aspect of resilience. Even a high level of social capital does not compensate for persistent administrative ineffectiveness, inconsistency of public activities or overloading of structures responsible for coordinating activities. Institutional efficiency should not be equated solely with bureaucratic efficiency. In the context of state security, it also encompasses the ability to quickly identify problems, exchange information, cooperate across institutions and maintain business continuity under pressure²⁷. Resilient institutions are, above all, capable of flexible, predictable and reliable action.

The relations between a social capital and institutional efficiency is of a feedback nature. Institutions that operate predictably and competently build social trust, while a low level of trust hinders the implementation of public policy and increases the costs of management. In turn, weakening institutional capability may accelerate the erosion of social bonds, as citizens begin to view the state as an entity incapable of protecting the public interests or ensuring basic predictability²⁸. For this reason the state resilience cannot be analysed solely in terms of material resources, formal competences or organisational solutions. Its actual level is determined by the quality of the state – society relationship.

The inclusion of social capital in the state security analysis is therefore significant in theory and in practice. This makes it possible to identify these factors which are not always directly taken into account in traditional security indicators, but which, in practice, determine a state's ability to maintain its effectiveness under pressure. A resilient state is one both capable of responding and maintaining

²⁵ D. Lockwood, *Social Integration and System Integration*, in: *Explorations in Social Change*, G.K. Zollschan, W. Hirsch, Houghton Mifflin (eds.), Boston 1964, pp. 244–257.

²⁶ J. Chan, *Social Cohesion and the Governance of Public Order*, in: *Social Capital and Public Policy*, D. Halpern (ed.), Cambridge 2005, pp. 145–162.

²⁷ *Designing Resilience...*, pp. 7–18.

²⁸ OECD, *Trust and Public Policy. How Better Governance Can Help Rebuild Public Trust*, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2017/03/trust-and-public-policy_g1g74ea6/9789264268920-en.pdf, pp. 31–46 [accessed: 26 III 2026].

legitimacy, predictability and the ability to cooperate with a society²⁹. From the perspective of the internal security, this means that public trust, community cohesion and institutional efficiency must be treated as elements of a single, shared system of resilience.

An original analytical framework – a model for the early detection of state erosion

The earlier considerations explain why a tool is needed for internal security analysis that highlights not only fully-fledged crises, but also behaviours that gradually undermine a state's capacity to respond. To this end, an analytical approach is suggested that will assist in the early identification of the erosion of a state's resilience. It is not intended to replace existing risk assessment processes or to create a universal operational tool, but rather to coordinate observations of phenomena – often inconsistent and seemingly unrelated – whose simultaneous occurrence may indicate a reduction in a state's capacity to adapt to changing conditions³⁰. The model is auxiliary and interpretive in nature. It serves to identify trends and interdependencies rather than to generate simple forecasts or automatic assessments.

The model is based on the premise that the resilience of the state is not a binary state – it cannot be described solely as 'present' or 'absent'. It is dynamic (it changes over time), relational (it depends on the context and interactions between the levels) and multidimensional (encompasses social, institutional and informational dimensions). It may gradually weaken without triggering an immediate crisis, but at the same time significantly reducing the state's ability to respond to disruptions³¹. The second assumption concerns the very nature of erosion: it is the result of overlapping of processes in the social, institutional and informational dimensions. The third assumption is methodological in nature: early diagnosis should be based on the observation of the co-occurrence and persistence of warning signs, rather than on a single indicator³².

On this basis, the proposed analytical framework comprises three levels of observation: social, institutional and informational. They are not independent of one another – the model posits that true analytical value only emerges when the phenomena identified at each level begin to form a system in which they reinforce one another.

²⁹ R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone...*, pp. 349–363; OECD, *Trust and Public Policy...*, pp. 47–53.

³⁰ OECD, *Boosting Resilience...*, pp. 21–34.

³¹ D.D. Woods, *Four Concepts for Resilience...*, pp. 5–9.

³² *Designing Resilience...*, pp. 1–18.

The first – social – level encompasses relationships based on trust, cohesion and a readiness to cooperate. In this area, warning signs include, first and foremost, a sustained decline in trust in public institutions, a weakening of the legitimacy of government decisions, a growing perception of procedural injustice, an intensification of social polarisation, and a decline in citizens' willingness to respect the norms of collective action³³. This is not a matter of temporary tensions or political conflicts typical of democratic systems, but rather of processes that maintain a low level of social predictability and limit the state's ability to foster cooperation. From the perspective of internal security the social level is of fundamental importance, as it is precisely this level that determines whether the state, in the event of a disruption, can count on a minimum normative compliance and public acceptance of its actions.

The second level relates to an institutional dimension, that is, the state's capacity to act in a coordinated, predictable manner that is commensurate with the scale of the challenges. In this area, warning signs are usually less obvious, but are directly linked to the state's effectiveness. These include: increasing organisational overload, longer institutional response times, a diffusion of responsibility, a reduction in the capacity for coordination between public entities, an increase in the number of ad hoc measures at the expense of proactive measures, and a deterioration in the ability to maintain the continuity of public functions³⁴. It is difficult to capture these phenomena in a simple and one-dimensional way. However, their systematic occurrence may indicate that while the state formally remains in control, it is losing its resilience – understood as a capacity to function under pressure.

The third level encompasses the informational level, the importance of which for internal security has clearly increased in a context of high media fragmentation and an environment saturated with disinformation. In the proposed model, this level includes, in addition to the presence of false content, a broader range of factors: a decline in the credibility of communication, an increase in interpretative discrepancies regarding basic facts, growing narrative chaos, a reduction in institutions' ability to maintain a common framework for communication, and the public's increased susceptibility to destabilising messages³⁵. From the perspective of state resilience, the problem is not the mere existence of competing narratives, rather, it is a situation in which the state loses its ability to effectively communicate the rationale behind its actions and to maintain the minimum level of understanding necessary for an adequate level of social coordination.

³³ R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone...*, pp. 349–363; OECD, *Trust and Public Policy...*, pp. 31–53.

³⁴ OECD, *Boosting Resilience...*, pp. 35–39.

³⁵ RAND Corporation, *Truth Decay...*, pp. 1–18.

The value of the proposed framework lies in attempt to integrate the three specified categories of phenomena. According to the logic of the model, a single warning signal should not be interpreted as sufficient evidence of erosion in a state's resilience. It is only when symptoms from different levels occur simultaneously, persist over time and begin to reinforce one another that the system takes on analytical significance³⁶. For example: a decline in public trust may not yet have significant systemic consequences if institutions maintain a high level of efficiency and communication capacity. However, when accompanied by organisational overload and mounting informational chaos, the likelihood of the state entering the phase of diminished resilience increases. The model is therefore relational and sequential – it is used to observe configurations, rather than to list phenomena.

From a methodological point of view, this implies the need to treat indicators as elements of an early detection system. The proposed framework can be used both for comparative analysis and for interpreting processes taking place within a single state over the long term³⁷. Its utility lies primarily in the fact that it organises the observation of phenomena often analysed separately – social trust, institutional efficiency and communication between the authorities and society – even though in practice they remain interdependent.

At the same time, the limitations of the model must be stated. Firstly, it is not a forecasting tool in the strict sense and does not allow for the prediction of specific events. Secondly, its application requires caution in interpretation, as some of the indicators may be influenced by political, cultural and situational contexts³⁸. Thirdly, the model is neither for implementation nor for operational use. It does not constitute a proposed system for the services, but rather an attempt to create a structured research framework capable of supporting a more in-depth and multidimensional understanding of the processes that undermine the state's resilience.

The aim of the proposed analytical framework is to supplement existing analytical tools with a perspective that allows internal security to be viewed not only as the capacity to respond to a crisis, but also as the capacity to recognise that the state is beginning to weaken before this becomes clearly apparent.

³⁶ OECD, *Boosting Resilience...*, pp. 35–39.

³⁷ A. Wildavsky, *Searching for Safety...*, pp. 77–91.

³⁸ *Designing Resilience...*, pp. 15–18; RAND Corporation, *Truth Decay...*, pp. 45–51.

The United Kingdom and Poland as two test environments

With regard to the theoretical framework, an additional advantage of the proposed analytical model is that it can be viewed both as a concept and as a process of interpretation applied in real-world state contexts. This can be done by comparing two cases: the United Kingdom and Poland. Both countries are members of the same Western institutional framework, are highly exposed to information and geopolitical disruptions, and yet have different patterns or structures of relations between the society, state and administrative structures. This comparison is not a comprehensive comparative study, it serves to illustrate the model's operation.

In the case of the UK, the signs of a decline in resilience are particularly evident across all three levels of analysis. On a social level, the long-term effects of the tensions regarding Brexit have become increasingly significant, reinforcing a high degree of polarisation and undermining some of the mechanisms of integration³⁹. An additional complicating factor was the COVID-19 pandemic, which put both the public institutions' ability to coordinate and the level of social trust in decisions they take to the test⁴⁰. Data from recent years indicate that trust in the government and some institutions remains unstable, while the healthcare system, local authorities and certain public services are operating under organisational pressure⁴¹. In the proposed model, this implies the co-occurrence of signals at social and institutional levels: not so much an overt crisis as a reduced level of resilience resulting from the build-up of tensions.

In terms of information, the UK is a country with a high degree of media pluralism, which, in a context of significant communication fragmentation, may make it difficult for the public to interpret the state's actions in a consistent manner. The issue here is not the mere existence of a public dispute, but the lasting decline in the capacity of institutional communication to bring order to a crisis situation and reduce uncertainty. From the perspective of the proposed analytical framework, the UK therefore illustrates a diffused model of resilience erosion: the state formally retains a high level of functionality, but at the same time shows signs of overload,

³⁹ S.B. Hobolt, T.J. Leeper, J. Tilley, *Divided by the Vote: Affective Polarization in the Wake of the Brexit Referendum*, "British Journal of Political Science" 2021, vol. 51, no. 4, pp. 1476–1493.

⁴⁰ UK Parliament, House of Commons, *Coronavirus: Lessons Learned to Date*, <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/7496/documents/78687/default/>, pp. 7–18 [accessed: 26 III 2026].

⁴¹ OECD, *Government at a Glance 2023...*, pp. 145–152; *Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain*, Office for National Statistics, 20 IX 2024, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/bulletins/publicopinionsandsocialtrendsgreatbritain/august2024> [accessed: 26 III 2026].

a decline in predictability and a limited capacity for social reintegration following periods of strain⁴².

Poland presents a different pattern, but one that is equally interesting from an analytical perspective. At the social level, there is a relatively high capacity for collective mobilisation in extreme situations, as demonstrated by public reactions to the pandemic crisis, the increase in the number of Ukrainians arriving in Poland, and local forms of self-organisation within communities⁴³. This mobilisation component should be considered a vital resource for state resilience⁴⁴. At the same time, however, data regarding trust in public institutions and the quality of public debate point to the presence of tensions that could, in the long run, limit the sustainability of this asset. In the proposed model, this implies a situation in which the capacity for mobilisation does not go always hand in hand with a high level of institutional trust.

At the institutional level, Poland demonstrates the characteristics of a system capable of responding relatively quickly under pressure, but which is at the same time vulnerable to overload in terms of the coordination of actions and their limited predictability between different sectors of public administration⁴⁵. From the perspective of resilience, this means that the system may be effective in reactive mode but less stable in terms of long-term adaptation. As far as internal security is concerned, this is of fundamental importance, as a resilient state should both respond to threats and maintain operational coherence and social legitimacy during periods of increased tension.

The informational dimension also points to a pattern of vulnerability that differs from the British one but is equally important. Polish communication landscape is characterised by highly dynamic interpretative conflict and the strong influence identity-based and polarising messages⁴⁶. From the perspective of the proposed analytical framework this does not automatically imply low resilience, but it does

⁴² Institute for Government, *Performance Tracker 2024*, London 2024, pp. 9–22.

⁴³ J. Domaradzki et al., *Volunteering in the Front Line of the Ukrainian Refugee Crisis: A Brief Report from Poland*, “Frontiers in Public Health” 2022, vol. 10, pp. 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.979751>.

⁴⁴ OECD, *OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results. Building Trust in a Complex Policy Environment*, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/07/oecd-survey-on-drivers-of-trust-in-public-institutions-2024-results_eeb36452/9a20554b-en.pdf, pp. 17–29 [accessed: 26 III 2026].

⁴⁵ OECD, *Government at a Glance 2023...*, pp. 153–158; OECD, *OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust...*, pp. 31–41.

⁴⁶ *Commission Staff Working Document. 2024 Rule of Law Report*, SWD(2024) 821 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52024SC0821> [accessed: 26 III 2026].

increase the risk of a situation in which even the state's rational and correct actions may be perceived in widely differing ways, thereby limiting the ability to foster a coherent social response.

The United Kingdom and Poland represent two different profiles of resilience. The UK is showing signs of erosion in the form of a prolonged systemic strain and a diffused loss of social and institutional cohesion. Poland demonstrates greater readiness for mobilisation and situational responsiveness, but at the same time remains vulnerable to tensions arising from limited stability of institutional trust and high polarisation in communication⁴⁷. In both cases, the value of the proposed analysis framework lies in the fact that it enables us to capture not so much the general 'strength' or 'weakness' of a state as the configuration of factors that may, in the long term, strengthen or weaken its resilience.

Implications for the internal security system – the importance of multi-source and process-based analysis for the state

Adopting a process-based approach to the state's resilience leads to a significant shift in the way we think about internal security. The conventional concept of the security system focuses on detecting threats that have become apparent at the operational level (incidents, acts of violence, breakdowns, or other incidents requiring a response). This approach remains crucial, but it is not sufficient for processes that develop gradually and do not necessarily manifest themselves immediately in the form of an overt crisis. At the macro level, this means that the state must complement reactive measures with a long-term oversight. It is necessary to monitor the process in order to detect trends that undermine the ability to act before the effects of such trends become directly apparent⁴⁸.

The significance of such an approach stems from the very nature of modern threats. Many of them are not the consequence of a single event, but rather as the result of a long-term overlap of social, organisational and informational factors. Under such conditions, an analysis focused solely on the incident may accurately describe the crisis moment, but it does not always capture the conditions that enabled or exacerbated the crisis. Monitoring long-term processes thus becomes a crucial element in identifying systemic vulnerability⁴⁹. In practice, this entails

⁴⁷ OECD, *Government at a Glance 2023*..., pp. 145–158; Institute for Government, *Performance Tracker 2024*..., pp. 23–29.

⁴⁸ OECD, *Boosting Resilience*..., pp. 21–34.

⁴⁹ A. Boin et al., *The Politics of Crisis Management*..., pp. 25–42.

a greater analytical sensitivity to phenomena that are dispersed, low-intensity and seemingly insignificant, but which acquire strategic importance only when viewed in combination.

For this reason, multi-source analysis becomes particularly important. For the processes leading to the erosion of a state's resilience are not visible solely in a single type of data or within a single administrative sector. Identifying them requires combining information on public sentiment, trust in institutions, organisational effectiveness of public structures, quality of the communication between the authorities and the public as well as dynamics of information environment⁵⁰. The key lies not in maximising the amount of data, but in appropriately combining and interpreting it. Only an integrative perspective makes it possible to distinguish a transient disturbance from a more persistent weakened resilience.

This type of approach is also significant for strategic planning. If internal security is to encompass the ability to neutralise a threat and maintain operational effectiveness under tension, then planning cannot be limited to crisis scenarios viewed merely as a reaction to an event. It should also include an analysis of the circumstances under which a country finds itself in a state of disruption – that is, an assessment of whether it possesses a sufficient level of public trust, institutional coordination and communication capacity⁵¹. In this sense, the analysis of resilience does not compete with traditional security planning, but rather builds on it, shifting the focus from the question 'What will happen?' to the equally important question: 'What state the country will be in when it faces these challenges?'

Such a process-based perspective is also important for institutional resilience management. It allows us to view the state's efficiency as a resource that requires monitoring, strengthening and periodic adjustment. In the face of modern threats, public institutions operate in an environment of constant informational, organisational, social and geopolitical pressure. In such circumstances institutional resilience depends not only on procedures and formal competences, but also on the ability to learn, adapt and maintain operational consistency over time⁵². Recognising the symptoms of erosion can therefore serve not so much as a warning but rather as a stabilising function – enabling the early identification of areas requiring correction before the threat fully materialises.

The analytical framework proposed in this article does not constitute a ready-made implementation solution, nor does it claim to replace existing risk assessment tools. Its value lies in clarifying the observational perspective and in highlighting

⁵⁰ OECD, *Government at a Glance 2023...*, pp. 17–24.

⁵¹ *Designing Resilience...*, pp. 7–18.

⁵² D.D. Woods, *Four Concepts for Resilience...*, pp. 5–9.

that the internal security of the state requires the simultaneous consideration of social, institutional and informational processes. For the security system, this implies the need to develop an analytical culture more focused on phenomena that unfold over time – phenomena that are less spectacular yet often more strategically important than isolated incidents⁵³. In this sense, process-based analysis does not constitute an alternative to traditional thinking about the security, but rather its necessary complement.

Summary and conclusions

The aim of the article was to propose an analytical framework enabling the early detection of processes leading to the erosion of state resilience in the context of the internal security. It was assumed that modern states have increasingly sophisticated instruments for responding to sudden events, while the tools for identifying processes that gradually erode a state's capacity to act remain less advanced. The analysis conducted supports the validity of the working hypothesis: the erosion of state resilience can be recognised before the onset of an overt crisis, provided that security analysis takes into account not only incidents, but also the accumulated symptoms of weakness at the social, institutional and informational levels.

Internal security is not merely a function of the state's response capacity. Its actual level is also determined in part by the quality of the relationship between the state and society, the ability of institution to function under pressure, and the capacity to maintain a basic level of consistency in communication and organisation. In this sense, the erosion of state resilience constitutes a problem of internal security because it gradually reduces the security margin and limits the state's ability to adapt in the face of disruptions⁵⁴.

The analytical framework proposed in the article is intended to be supporting and organisational in nature. Its primary usefulness lies in its ability to capture the configuration of phenomena which, in classical models of security, are often analysed separately. The social, institutional and informational perspective allows us to view the state resilience as a system of interdependent resources and vulnerabilities, rather than one-dimensional characteristic of public entity. The comparison of Poland and the United Kingdom showed that this model can also be useful for interpreting different institutional environments.

⁵³ OECD, *Boosting Resilience...*, pp. 35–39.

⁵⁴ OECD, *Boosting Resilience...*, pp. 35–39.

Due to the limitations of the article, the presented framework has not undergone rigorous empirical validation and does not constitute a measurement model. Furthermore, some of the proposed indicators are indirect and context-dependent, which means that their interpretation requires caution and takes into account the specific characteristics of a given state and historic moment. Moreover, the author deliberately does not go into the operational or implementation levels, as the aim of the article was to formulate an analytical proposal, not to design a specific institutional instrument⁵⁵.

Further research into the model should focus on three areas. Firstly, it would seem sensible to develop a more precise set of indicators that can be monitored comparatively over time. Secondly, it would be advisable to assess the usefulness of the proposed framework in analysing selected state crises and borderline situations. Thirdly, deepening the relationships between social capital, institutional efficiency and state security resilience as a joint field of research remains a worthwhile direction to pursue⁵⁶.

The final conclusion, therefore, is that there is a need to shift a part of the analytical focus away from the crisis response itself towards the early identification of the conditions under which a state becomes less resilient. It is precisely the shift in perspective – from an incident to a process – that may be a useful complement to the contemporary reflections on internal security.

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⁵⁵ *Designing Resilience...*, pp. 15–18.

⁵⁶ OECD, *Trust and Public Policy...*, pp. 47–53.

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