

SHARED LEADERSHIP AND AI-ENABLED CONTINGENCY PLANNING IN UKRAINIAN FIRMS DURING THE 2022–2025 WAR

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Abstract. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, which began in February 2022, caused acute and long-term disruptions in the activities of Ukrainian companies, forcing them to quickly rebuild their organizational structures, decision-making mechanisms, and planning practices. This article offers a conceptual and analytical explanation of how wartime conditions accelerated the transition from centralised management measures to cross-functional crisis teams, shared leadership mechanisms and emerging learning operating models. This study is based on secondary data analysis and illustrative case studies, rather than original empirical research. It combines business survey data, institutional and corporate reports, and academic literature. On this basis, the article outlines an organizational trajectory from centralization to distributed cross-functional decision-making and beyond to what this study defines as a learning operating model. The article also highlights that AI-enabled practices (including situational dashboards, scenario modeling, demand forecasting, and knowledge management) supported by generative AI can accelerate collective situational awareness in wartime. However, role overload and coordination burdens can also increase in the absence of clarity of purpose. Thus, shared leadership in the study is viewed as potentially “a dual-effect organizational mechanism”. The conclusions outline the implications for Ukrainian business practices and compare the identified trajectories of organizational response of Ukrainian companies with future constraints associated with the European model of AI governance. This paper addresses a gap in the literature by establishing a link among shared leadership, contingency planning, and AI-based situational analysis in the specific context of business resilience in wartime. And its practical contribution is to identify organizational conditions under which AI tools can support distributed decision making without increasing coordination overhead.

Keywords: shared leadership, contingency planning, crisis task forces, artificial intelligence, business

Introduction

A full-scale military invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022, created one of the most challenging business operating environments recorded in modern peacetime economic history. Ukrainian companies of all shapes and sizes faced simultaneous, multidimensional disruptions: the physical destruction of assets and infrastructure; the displacement of employees and partners along supply chains; instability of energy supplies, financial systems, and logistics networks; and an unpredictable security situation with a very limited forecasting horizon. This combination of stressors is what Boin et al. (2005) have called a “transboundary crisis”- a situation in which threats transcend traditional planning frameworks and require organizational responses that exceed the capabilities of any single manager or level of hierarchy.

In the science of organizations and organizational behavior, crisis conditions have long been associated with paradoxical tension. On the one hand, acute uncertainty creates centripetal pressures that push decision-making authority up the hierarchy as leaders seek to control and consolidate information in the face of danger (Staw et al., 1981). On the other hand, the increasing complexity and speed of operational decisions (such as in wartime) tend to exceed the organizational and cognitive capacities of individual leaders. As a result, companies need more distributed, cross-functional decision-making, allowing several teams to analyse information simultaneously (Faraj, Xiao, 2006). The object of research in this article is the organizational transformation of contingency planning and decision-making mechanisms in medium and large-sized Ukrainian companies under wartime conditions during 2022–2025, with a focus on the role of shared leadership and planning practices using artificial intelligence. The article aims to explain how Ukrainian companies have transitioned from centralized emergency decision-making to cross-functional crisis teams and more distributed forms of management, and how AI-based tools can support or hinder this transition. The academic and practical literature on implementing AI in high-uncertainty environments is still in its early stages, but there is growing evidence that AI tools - from situational dashboards and demand forecasting models to generative AI systems that support knowledge synthesis - are increasingly being integrated into business decision-making processes (Davenport, Mittal, 2023; Haenlein, Kaplan, 2019).

The objectives of the research are aimed at achieving results contribute at three interrelated levels: 1) drawing on business survey data and policy analysis to provide a grounded description of the experiences of Ukrainian

firms that restructured their decision-making systems in response to wartime challenges; 2) developing a theoretically grounded framework that provides a comprehensive understanding of collaborative leadership and AI-enabled planning as complementary organizational mechanisms; and 3) considering these processes in the context of the emerging European regulatory framework for AI governance, taking into account the upcoming constraints that will determine the possibility of successfully integrating AI solutions into Ukrainian enterprises as the country advances toward European Union membership. The study employed the following methods: analysis of secondary data, a conceptual synthesis of the literature on organisational behaviour and AI management, and an illustrative analysis of specific cases based on individual Ukrainian companies.

Research methodology and evidence base

The study analyzes processes for the period 2022–2025, including the initial phase of emergency response - the military invasion in February 2022; the adaptation and stabilization phase amid ongoing hostilities in 2023; and the initial institutionalization phase, which spans 2024–2025 and continues to the present. The article primarily focuses on medium and large-sized Ukrainian companies operating in sectors with sufficient organizational complexity to facilitate the formation of working groups and contingency protocols. Micro-enterprises and informal economic activities were not analyzed. Consequently, this study does not claim to represent the entire sectoral or geographical diversity of Ukrainian business. The comparison with the EU AI governance framework is included as an orientation toward future constraints and does not represent current regulatory practices in Ukraine.

The evidence base draws on several categories of sources. Data from business surveys (including studies by AmCham Ukraine and McKinsey & Company), as well as findings from the IFC/World Bank Business Pulse Survey, provide a quantitative foundation for analysing contingency planning and the establishment of crisis management teams within Ukrainian companies. Policy and institutional reports from organisations such as the EBRD, the OECD and the Kyiv School of Economics help contextualise the macro- -level shocks of wartime and the private sector's adaptation. Academic literature on shared leadership, situational awareness, crisis coordination organisational learning and dynamic management capabilities provides the theoretical framework for interpreting these organisational responses. Corporate reports and official statements from individual Ukrainian companies are used as illustrative examples of AI and data-driven adaptation. The analyzed materials indicate a large-scale and distributed organizational response by Ukrainian businesses that extends beyond a purely reactive, top-down model of emergency management. This necessitates research and the substantiation of theoretical frameworks capable of explaining collective, distributed organizational action and the prospects for the future redesign of decision-making organization.

Theoretical framework

Shared leadership is defined as a dynamic, interactive process of influence in which people guide each other toward achieving group or organizational goals. This is fundamentally different from vertical leadership, which involves the authority and direction of a formally appointed hierarchical leader. That is, the leader's influence is not concentrated in the hands of one appointed person, but is distributed among several group members. Shared leadership is an emergent property of a team (Pearce, Conger, 2003). A Carson et al. (2007) empirical study showed that shared leadership in teams is positively related to team effectiveness. And this relationship is mediated by factors such as shared purpose, social support, and voice. According to the authors, shared leadership also requires purposefully created conditions, namely, a clear common goal. This finding is particularly relevant to the Ukrainian business context under wartime conditions. The formation of crisis task forces (cross-functional teams) for action in emergency situations can be viewed as an organizational mechanism that simultaneously enables and conditions shared leadership. The realization of the potential benefits of this mechanism depends primarily on how well the shared purpose is articulated, which Carson et al. also define as a “prerequisite” in conditions of extreme uncertainty. Hazy and Uhl-Bien (2015) expand on this discussion. They place shared leadership within the context of leadership in complexity theory. The idea is that in rapidly changing conditions, leadership functions must be distributed throughout the organizational system to ensure adaptive understanding of the situation. The authors distinguish between administrative leadership (maintaining structures), auxiliary leadership (creating conditions for adaptive work), and adaptive leadership (catalyzing emerging changes). In our view, during military operations, all three functions operate simultaneously. This creates demands that exceed the capabilities of centralized leadership models. The concepts and theories listed above provide a theoretical justification for the distributed structures adopted by Ukrainian firms.

The invasion created conditions of acute collapse in many spheres. And this requiring a rapid collective restoration of organizational meaning. The relevance of sensemaking theory to the Ukrainian military context is also significant and deserves attention. Organizational sensemaking theory (Weika, 1995) provides a fundamental framework for understanding how organizations construct meaning in the face of uncertainty. Specifically, the formation of crisis task forces can be viewed as an organizational response to the breakdown of sensemaking. The subsequent integration of AI-enabled tools into these processes adds a new dimension to sensemaking theory. Existing artificial intelligence systems and models that process large datasets and generate structured outputs can be viewed as tools for sensemaking. The learning model proposed in this study synthesises Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) theory of knowledge creation with Helfat and Martin's (2015) dynamic concept of managerial capabilities. It demonstrates how knowledge and managerial capabilities acquired in crisis conditions can be institutionalised into repeatable and scalable organisational structures.

Wartime organizational trajectories in Ukrainian firms

In the first weeks of the full-scale outbreak in February 2022, the primary organizational response of Ukrainian companies was rapid centralization of decision-making. Senior management and CEOs assumed direct operational control over functions previously delegated to middle management. This was driven by the need for coordinated, rapid responses to immediate threats, which significantly exceeded the capabilities of existing protocols. However, the structural limitations of centralization became apparent quickly, as companies faced not a single, specific, localized crisis event, but a protracted, multidimensional situation of challenges and regular disruptions. A CEO, who must simultaneously make decisions on employee transfers, operational continuity, supply chain reorientation, and financial security during a crisis, is unable to maintain sole, significant authority in all these areas. The cognitive and coordination demands of such an environment created functional pressure in favor of distributed decision-making structures - structures whose institutionalization began with the subsequent formation of crisis task forces. This trajectory (Fig. 1) - from initial centralization through the realization of cognitive overload to the deliberate construction of distributed decision-making architectures - implies a shift from command-and-control logic to network coordination and is defined as a characteristic evolution of organizations in protracted crisis environments (Hart, 2003).

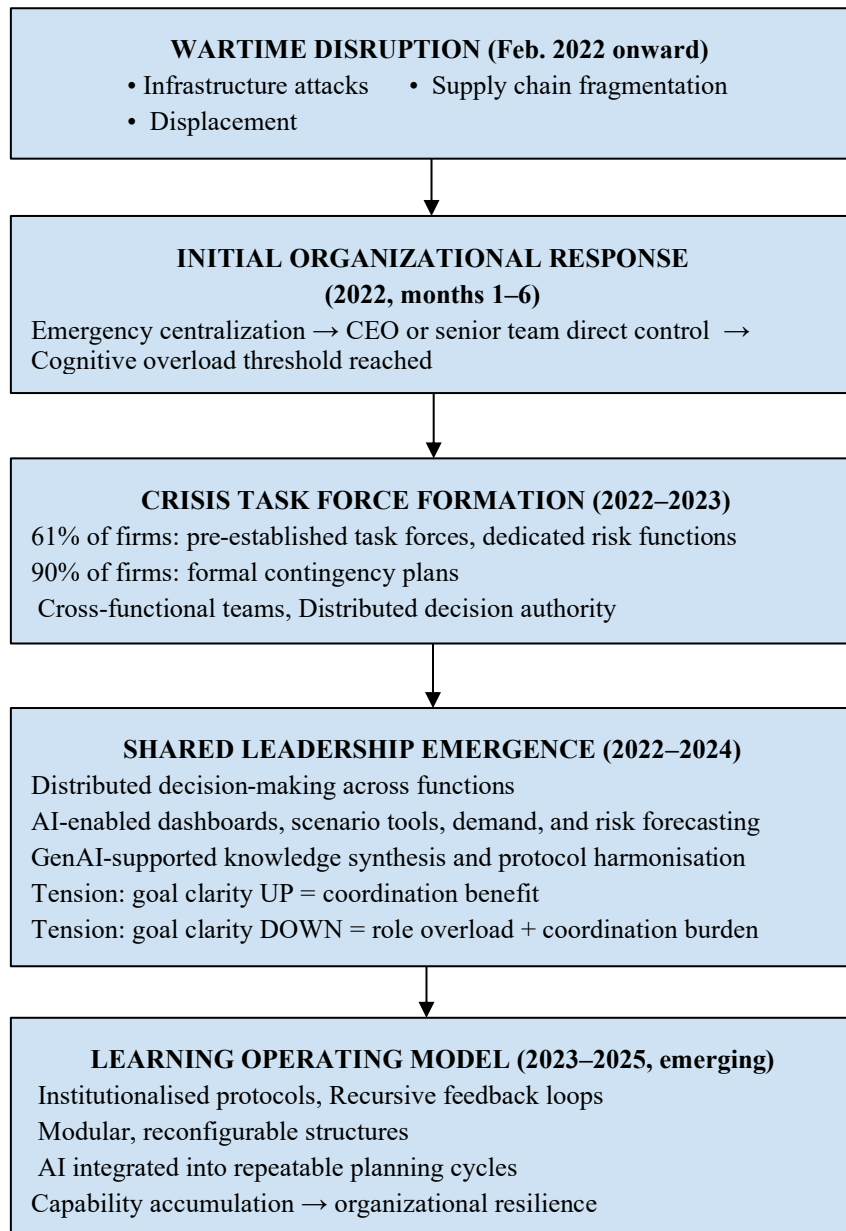


Fig. 1. Conceptual flow: from wartime disruption to learning operating model
Source: created by the author

The literature on crisis leadership emphasizes that crises are high-salience, potentially disruptive events that require specific forms of coordination and leadership. Systematic reviews focus on leaders' cognitive and behavioral processes, including sensemaking (Vogus, Sutcliffe, 2007). In organizational resilience research, emphasis is placed on the fact that resilient organizations operate according to high-reliability logic: "mindful alertness," "preoccupation with failure," and the active testing of risk assumptions (Wu et al., 2021). These ideas align directly with contingency planning. In the current wartime situation in Ukraine, crisis task forces and contingency plans help firms detect problems and respond quickly. Over time, these temporary crisis responses can evolve into a learning operating model, formalizing new methods through procedures and digital infrastructure.

The transformation from crisis task force structures toward a more resilient form of shared leadership involves a qualitative shift in organizational logic: from reactive, event-driven coordination to proactive, institutionalized distribution of decision-making authority. Effective shared leadership requires three conditions: shared purpose, social support, and voice- the opportunity to freely express concerns and propose alternatives (Carson et al., 2007). The wartime experience of Ukrainian crisis task forces has accelerated the development of all three conditions. We examine the concept of the learning operating model in the context of an evolving organizational form that institutionalizes the capabilities generated by the crisis into reproducible and scalable structures (Table 1).

Table 1. The learning operating model: characteristics and development path

Dimension	Crisis Task Force Mode	Learning Operating Model
1) Decision authority	Concentrated in task force, temporary escalation procedures	Distributed with formalized escalation paths and defined authority thresholds
2) Planning horizon	Short-term (days to weeks), reactive	Integrated short-, medium-, and long-term, with scenario-based contingencies
3) Information processing	Intensive manual aggregation, periodic dashboard review	Systematic AI-assisted aggregation with human interpretation governance
4) Learning capture	Informal, dependent on individual memory	Formal after-action protocols, structured knowledge documentation, shared repositories
5) Cross-functional coordination	Event-driven, triggered by disruption	Standing cross-functional interfaces with regular cadence
6) Structural flexibility	High emergency flexibility, low baseline efficiency	Modular design enabling rapid reconfiguration without sacrificing baseline performance
7) AI integration	Opportunistic, dependent on individual initiative	Systematic, governed, embedded in operational cycles
8) Leadership development	Intensive but informal learning under pressure	Deliberate capability building with institutional support

Thus, the learning operating model is presented as an organizational form characterized by four features:

1. distributed decision-making authority across functions;
2. institutionalized protocols for collective sensemaking;
3. regular feedback loops that help update plans based on operational experience;
4. flexible organizational structures that can be quickly adapted to changing conditions.

Recent research has found that shared leadership can enhance team resource effectiveness, but it can also increase employee workload. That is, additional leadership roles and interpersonal responsibilities can lead to role overload (Hao et al., 2025). As emphasized above, goal clarity is a critical factor here. The implication is that greater goal clarity can weaken the relationship between shared leadership and role overload, while lower goal clarity exacerbates the negative effects. That's why this mechanism becomes central to the discussion of AI decision-making in this context: although new AI systems can accelerate information processing, in the absence of clear goals, they can exacerbate workload and complicate coordination.

AI-enabled contingency planning and case illustrations

While shared leadership provides the organizational and human foundation for resilience, AI serves as a mechanism for analytics and empowerment for effective decision-making. Between 2022 and 2025, Ukrainian companies will increasingly integrate AI-based predictive analytics into their contingency planning systems (Sampson, 2025). These tools enable proactive disruption management by identifying risks in real time and automating mitigation strategies (Google, 2025). For a country facing systemic threats to its energy grid, logistics, and labor market, artificial intelligence has become a strategic competitive advantage. The "Agentic State" concept introduced by the Ukrainian government- a government operating on the basis of AI and anticipating the needs of its citizens - has set the tone for the business community (Sampson, 2025). By 2030, Ukraine aims to rank among the global top three in AI integration in the public sector, with 75% of private-sector companies expected to utilize AI in their daily operations (Google, 2025). As of 2025, 76% of Ukrainian companies report implementing AI in at least one business function, such as marketing, analytics, or recruitment (Sampson, 2025).

The central analytical focus here is our assertion that AI-based tools amplify both the positive and negative impacts of the organizational structures in which they are deployed. For teams with a clear shared purpose, well-defined roles, and sufficient AI literacy, AI tools are likely to accelerate collective sensemaking, improve decision quality, and reduce the cognitive load associated with information processing in highly complex environments. Conversely, for teams that lack these prerequisites, the same tools can create information overload, confusion in interpretation, and exacerbate the coordination burden already inherent in distributed decision-making structures (Fig. 2).

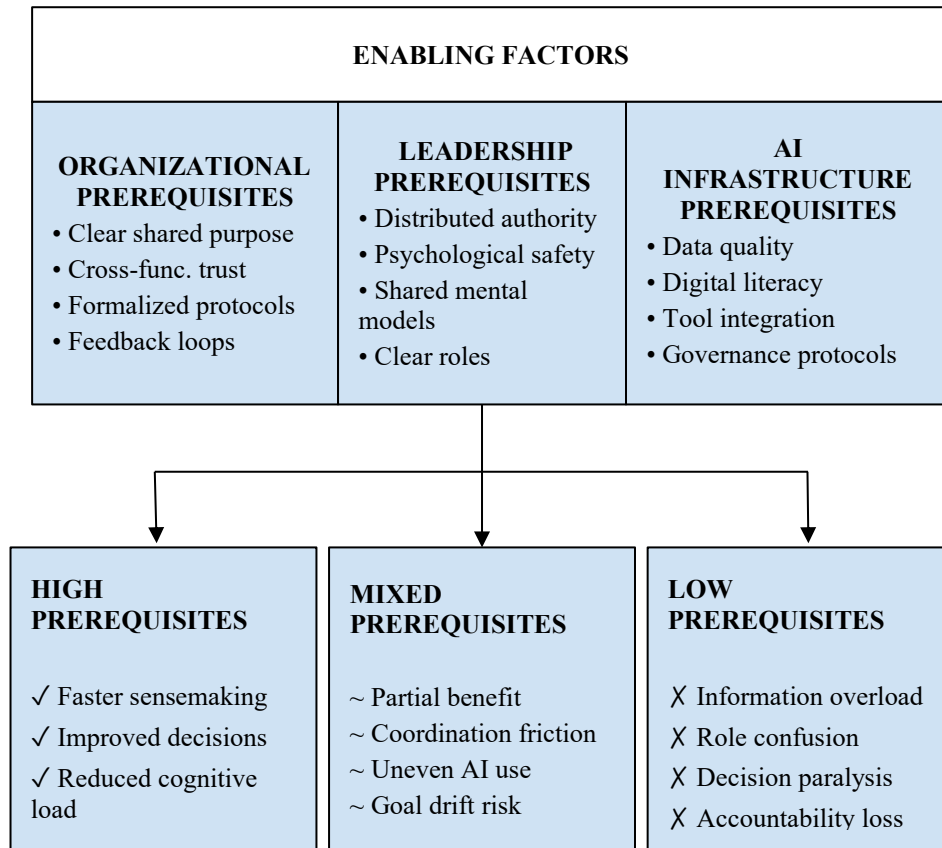


Fig. 2. Drivers, barriers, and outcomes: collaborative leadership with AI

Source: created by the author

In a crisis, the problem is often not a lack of data, but rather its fragmentation. Two other significant challenges are timeliness and the high cognitive load on coordinators. The format, completeness, and relevance of information can indirectly improve the process and quality of decision-making by reducing the perceived complexity of tasks and increasing satisfaction with the information (Hjelle et al., 2024). This allows dashboards and management systems to be considered part of a shared leadership mechanism. If management decisions are distributed across different functions and teams, a common information space is particularly important for effective coordination. This means that participants must have access to understandable, up-to-date, and consistent data.

In the context of generative AI (GenAI) and knowledge management, recent research and analytical reports indicate rapid adoption of GenAI in organizations. It is most often used for document summarization, text preparation, and support of service or operational processes (Chui et al., 2023). Academic literature also suggests considering GenAI implementation through the lens of organizational learning. In particular, this involves the use of “sandboxes” to safely test new technologies and gradually implement them into organizational processes (Te’eni et al., 2026). In wartime, this can be understood as a way to accelerate the “signal - interpretation - action” cycle while maintaining control over management decisions.

Thus, AI tools can accelerate collective situational awareness and action coordination. However, this is only possible if three conditions are met: a developed data infrastructure, clear collaboration rules, and sufficiently clear goals and participant roles.

Documented cases from the Ukrainian corporate sector provide evidence consistent with the theoretical framework presented in this study. Table 2 systematizes three examples - from the energy, retail, and telecommunications sectors - which confirm that AI-driven planning tools were promptly implemented in Ukrainian companies during active wartime, and that the developmental conditions described above (Fig. 2) were at least partially met where digital infrastructure and organizational capabilities coincided.

Table 2. AI-Enabled organizational adaptation in Ukrainian firms

Dimension	DTEK (Energy sector)	Fozzy Group (Retail sector)	Kyivstar (Telecommunications)
Primary disruption context	210 + missile or drone strikes; ~ 90% of thermal generating capacity destroyed or damaged by early 2024	Severe logistical disruption; volatile consumer behavior across 1,100+ stores and 42,500 SKUs	Wartime demand for real-time data infrastructure and distributed organizational intelligence
AI and data practice deployed	AI customer service assistant (Microsoft Azure OpenAI Service + Azure AI Search); AI-assisted cybersecurity threat detection (MODUS X unit)	Probabilistic AI-driven demand forecasting platform at store-, SKU-, and day-level granularity	Cloud-based AI modules: real-time ML analytics, generative AI tools, BI dashboards, predictive modelling, anomaly detection, automated reporting
Measured or reported outcome	Query resolution time reduced from 4.5 to 3.5 min (YASNO, 3.5M customers); threat detection speed increased tenfold; 150M + cyberattack attempts monitored	Improved inventory accuracy; reduced waste; shelf availability maintained despite supply chain disruption	Consolidated data platform enabling “single source of truth”; automated analytics supporting cross-functional planning
Shared leadership and sensemaking relevance	AI supports distributed operational continuity across physically decentralized infrastructure; enables parallel decision layers	AI enables cross-functional demand-supply coordination under uncertainty; reduces cognitive load on planners	AI infrastructure provides organizational basis for collective sensemaking and contingency planning across business units
Source type	<i>Corporate reports and official communications (DTEK, 2024)</i>	<i>Corporate reports and official communications (Fozzy Group, 2023)</i>	<i>Official product pages and corporate communications (Kyivstar, 2023–2024)</i>

Faster collective sensemaking, more substantiated scenario planning, more systematic knowledge acquisition, and more timely risk identification - all of these represent the contribution that artificial intelligence tools can make to shared leadership processes during both the wartime period and the post-war recovery phase. However, these tools also create new risks, particularly when they create an appearance of precision not justified by the quality of the underlying data, or when they increase the flow of information faster than organizational structures can process it.

Therefore, AI “amplifies” both sides of shared leadership: the positive side is that it compiles signals faster, accelerates scenario preparation, and enables the synchronization of the “big picture” through dashboards and automated reports, among other functions. Negative side: the increased volume of available information and the accelerated pace of communication can create additional management risks. Insufficient clarity in goals, roles, and responsibilities increases coordination burden, increases role overload, and can provoke competition among participants for control over decision-making.

Implications for AI governance and future organizational design

The future adoption of artificial intelligence practices by Ukrainian companies should be understood not merely as a technological choice, but also as an institutionally determined trajectory shaped by the European regulatory framework, towards which Ukraine is gradually moving. Ukraine’s aspiration to join the EU, even under martial law (European Commission, 2025), increases the likelihood that European AI governance standards will become mandatory operational constraints in the near and medium term. The current EU AI Act (Regulation EU, 2024/1689) establishes a risk-based regulatory framework applicable to suppliers and developers of AI systems, distinguishing between categories of prohibited, high-risk, restricted-risk and low-risk systems (European Commission, 2024). For example, tools used for workforce planning, supply chain optimisation and financial risk assessment - processes that are particularly relevant in the context of wartime and the post-war recovery period - fall into the high-risk category. Consequently, this entails mandatory

requirements for risk management systems, data management protocols, technical documentation, and so on. A particularly important provision is the need to improve AI literacy (Article 4 of the Act), which requires organisations to ensure staff working with AI systems have sufficient AI literacy. In doing so, the context of use and stakeholder groups must be taken into account (European Commission AI Act Support Service, 2024). This requirement is directly linked to the dual dynamics presented in our study. Specifically, where AI literacy levels are uneven across shared governance structures, coordination asymmetries undermine both the quality of collective thinking and the capacity for human oversight - both of which are essential when implementing AI in high-risk environments. For Ukrainian firms, this requirement has dual significance: it is simultaneously a future regulatory obligation (as part of EU accession) and a current prerequisite for organisational effectiveness. Companies and organisations that invest in developing their staff's AI literacy are already seeing returns in terms of current performance, and will be better placed to meet compliance requirements in the future. In addition to the legislation, the ISO/IEC 42001:2023 standard provides a practical framework for an AI management system. It covers risk management, transparency, and ethical use (ISO, 2023). Ukrainian firms can therefore adopt it as a template for institutionalization that meets EU regulatory requirements.

Conclusions

Amid the ongoing war, Ukrainian companies have demonstrated a high level of formalised preparedness: in a survey of the business community, 90% reported having contingency plans in place, and 61% reported having crisis teams established in advance (AmCham Ukraine, 2022). At the same time, a significant proportion acknowledged the limited effectiveness of early plans, indicating the need not only to “have a plan” but also to develop mechanisms for implementation and training. International monitoring and assessments of damage and losses reveal the duration and systematic nature of operational disruptions as well as the scale of losses in commerce and industry. This makes crisis management a virtually permanent function rather than an isolated event. The case of Ukraine is significant in this regard, as it serves as a natural experiment in organisational adaptation under extremely adverse conditions.

The theoretical contribution of this article consists of three parts: it applies shared leadership theory to the under-researched context of wartime commercial enterprises; it develops a dual hypothesis regarding AI-enabled shared leadership (AI tools amplify the effects of underlying organizational structures, yielding benefits where goal clarity and organizational prerequisites are strong, while resulting in role and coordination overload where they are absent); and it introduces the learning model as a conceptual bridge between crisis response and organizational learning traditions.

The analysis and hypotheses deployed in this article provide grounds for outlining a series of organizational design priorities for Ukrainian companies as they continue to operate under wartime conditions and prepare for future post-war reconstruction.

The first priority is the deliberate institutionalization of crisis task force structures into permanent organizational capabilities. The second priority, in our view, is the development of shared purpose and goal clarity as organizational infrastructure. The third priority is the systematic development of AI (business processes, literacy). Ultimately, the broader argument boils down to the question of organizational capabilities under constraints: the task is not to maintain the emergency mode generated by a crisis, but to institutionalize the genuine capabilities that emerge from it.

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PASIDALYTOJI LYDERYSTĖ IR DIRBTINIO INTELEKTO PALAIKOMAS NENUMATYTŲ ATVEJŲ PLANAVIMAS UKRAINOS ĮMONĖSE 2022–2025 M. KARO METU

Santrauka

2022 m. vasarį prasidėjusi Rusijos Federacijos plataus masto invazija į Ukrainą sukėlė ūmius ir ilgalaikius Ukrainos įmonių veiklos sutrikimus, privertusi jas greitai pertvarkyti organizacines struktūras, sprendimų priėmimo mechanizmus ir planavimo praktiką. Šiame straipsnyje pateikiamas konceptualus ir analitinis paaiškinimas, kaip karo sąlygos paspartino perėjimą nuo centralizuotų valdymo priemonių prie tarpfunkcinių krizių komandų, pasidalytosios lyderystės mechanizmų ir besiformuojančių mokymusi grindžiamų veiklos modelių. Šis tyrimas grindžiamas antrinių duomenų analize ir iliustraciniais atvejų tyrimais, o ne originaliu empiriniu tyrimu. Jame derinami verslo apklausų duomenys, institucijų ir įmonių ataskaitos bei akademinė literatūra. Remiantis tuo, straipsnyje apibrėžiama organizacinė trajektorija nuo centralizacijos prie paskirstyto tarpfunkcinio sprendimų priėmimo ir toliau – prie to, ką šiame tyrime siūloma vadinti mokymusi grindžiamu veiklos modeliu. Straipsnyje taip pat pabrėžiama, kad dirbtiniu intelektu grindžiamos praktikos, įskaitant situacines valdymo suvestines, scenarijų modeliavimą, paklausos prognozavimą ir žinių valdymą, palaikomos generatyvinio dirbtinio intelekto, gali paspartinti kolektyvinę situacijos suvokimą karo sąlygomis. Tačiau, nesant aiškaus tikslo, taip pat gali didėti vaidmenų perkrova ir koordinavimo našta. Todėl šiame tyrime pasidalytoji lyderystė vertinama kaip potencialus „dvejopo poveikio organizacinis mechanizmas“. Išvadose aptariamos pasekmės Ukrainos verslo praktikai ir lyginamos nustatytos Ukrainos įmonių organizacinio atsako trajektorijos su būsimais apribojimais, susijusiais su Europos dirbtinio intelekto valdymo modeliu. Straipsnis užpildo literatūros spragą, susiedamas pasidalytąją lyderystę, nenumatytų situacijų planavimą ir dirbtiniu intelektu grindžiamą situacinę analizę konkrečiame verslo atsparumo karo sąlygomis kontekste. Praktinis straipsnio indėlis yra organizacinių sąlygų, kuriomis dirbtinio intelekto priemonės gali palaikyti paskirstytą sprendimų priėmimą nedidindamos koordinavimo naštos, nustatymas.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: pasidalytoji lyderystė, nenumatytų atvejų planavimas, krizių valdymo grupės, DI palaikomas prasmės kūrimas, Ukrainos įmonės

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