

STRATEGIC RESILIENCE AND INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT: HOUSING NARRATIVES AND THE "INDUSTRIAL FORTRESS" IN UKRAINE

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Abstract. The ongoing full-scale conflict in Ukraine has created an urgent need to redefine national economic resilience through the lens of psychological drivers and structural adaptation. The present study investigates the manner in which consolidated socio-economic discourses contribute to the maintenance of investor confidence and the continuity of industry in circumstances of extreme geopolitical turbulence. The objective of the present study is to ascertain the causal relationship between the residential housing market and industrial investment, thereby establishing the "Great Reconstruction" narrative as a pivotal economic stabiliser. In order to achieve this objective, the investigation employs Robert Shiller's "Narrative Economics" to track how stories about EU integration and post-war prosperity transform into tangible capital flows. The methodology integrates a comparative historical analysis of Ukraine's transition against the 1991-1995 Croatian model with a quantitative assessment of official economic indicators from 2020 to 2024. Statistical analysis demonstrates that the residential sector functions as a psychological anchor, where a 21.1% growth in housing completions in 2024, totalling 9,759 thousand m², directly signaled safety to industrial stakeholders. Consequently, the industrial sector demonstrated a remarkable response, with a record 32 new park registrations during the same period. The paper introduces the "Industrial Fortress" concept, which models industrial zones as autonomous units combining physical security, energy independence, and social connectivity. The findings demonstrate that Ukraine's EU candidate status accelerates institutional adaptation significantly faster than historical precedents, establishing the country as a strategic hub for European nearshoring. The practical value of this study lies in its analytical framework, which policymakers can utilise to employ housing trends as leading indicators for industrial planning. Consequently, the research provides a roadmap for securing continuous production and attracting strategic investment by leveraging the synergy between infrastructure stability and narrative-driven expectations.

Keywords: strategic resilience, narrative economics, industrial fortress, EU integration, nearshoring, wartime investment, industrial parks.

JEL Classification: O14, P25, R31, F15, H56, Q01

1. Introduction

The contemporary global economic landscape is undergoing a fundamental structural transition as the established logic of international trade shifts from a singular focus on cost efficiency to a prioritisation of systemic resilience. This paradigm shift was catalysed by the cumulative shocks of the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, which exposed the structural vulnerabilities of globalised, just-in-time logistics networks (Akimova, 2023). Initial macroeconomic projections, notably the early assessments by the Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2022, characterised the conflict as a severe systemic threat. The OECD (2022) estimated that sustained disruptions to commodity prices and logistics could reduce global economic growth by more than 1 percentage point whilst simultaneously adding 2.5 percentage points to global inflation through volatility in energy and agricultural markets. In this context, Ukraine – a central node in the global supply chains for metals, agricultural products, and energy resources – became the epicentre of a crisis that many predicted would lead

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to a protracted period of deindustrialisation and capital flight.

However, the empirical evidence from 2023-2024 reveals a phenomenon of adaptive resilience that contradicts these early pessimistic forecasts. In order to elucidate this divergence, it is necessary to move beyond traditional quantitative models and employ the framework of "Narrative Economics" pioneered by Nobel Laureate Robert Shiller. Shiller (2017) posits that economic fluctuations are often precipitated by pervasive narratives, which disseminate throughout a population with the rapidity and infectivity of a viral contagion, exerting a direct influence on the decisions of investors and consumers. In the Ukrainian context, the narrative of the "Great Reconstruction" and the nation's "Irreversible Path to the European Union" has emerged as a coordinate system for investor expectations (Balytska, 2025). This narrative functions as an independent economic factor, providing a structured and optimistic outlook for a post-conflict future that effectively manages market sentiment and offsets the immediate psychological impact of active warfare (Shiller, 2019).

The central scientific novelty presented in this research is the conceptualisation of the residential housing market as a "psychological anchor" for industrial investment in conflict-affected regions. Conventional real estate theory categorises the housing sector as a lagging indicator of consumer demand. However, the present study provides evidence to suggest that in a high-risk conflict environment, the visible recovery of residential construction acts as a critical signalling mechanism for industrial capital (Case & Shiller, 2003). The proposal is put forward that the completion and commissioning of modern residential complexes in relatively secure regional clusters – specifically in the western and central regions of Ukraine – provides a visual and statistical guarantee of social stability. For industrial investors contemplating entry into an industrial park, the presence of stable housing infrastructure is indicative of the long-term retention of human capital. This, in turn, has the effect of significantly lowering the perceived entry risk and psychological barriers to investment (Hrabynskiy et al., 2023).

The objective of the research is to explore the complex interactions between residential and industrial infrastructure through a behavioural lens. As demonstrated in the field

of behavioural economics, anchoring bias is a cognitive phenomenon in which individuals place significant reliance on the initial piece of information they receive, in this case the visual evidence of completed housing (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). In a war zone, the conventional metrics of efficiency are superseded by the imperatives of physical and social continuity. The relocation of families in closer proximity to employment opportunities in industrial zones necessitates the development of new residential and public infrastructure. The objective of this study is to analyse the spatial and temporal synchrony between the recovery of the housing sector and the unprecedented surge in industrial infrastructure development. The hypothesis that residential construction acts as a leading indicator for manufacturing capacity is tested by analysing official data from the State The following statistics are drawn from the Statistics Service and the National Register of Industrial Parks for the 2020-2024 period. Furthermore, a critical contrast is drawn between Ukraine's rapid institutional adaptation under its EU candidate status and historical precedents such as the 1991–1995 Croatian war economy, as described by Schönfelder (2005). The final element of the study constitutes the formalisation of the 'Industrial Fortress' concept as an analytical construct for investment. In this regard, industrial parks are designed as autonomous capsules of security, energy independence and social stability.

2. Literature Review

The prevailing academic discourse on the management of national economies during periods of active warfare has historically centred on the tension between the necessity of centralized command and the preservation of market-based development. Bruno Schönfelder (2005), in his foundational analysis of the impact of the 1991–1995 war on the Croatian economy, observed that major conflicts in the 20th century typically forced developed nations toward command economies due to massive labour requirements for military production and the collapse of key civilian sectors such as tourism. During the period of Croatia's struggle for independence, the country was compelled to contend with considerable macroeconomic instability, typified by uncontrollable inflation and the implementation of two substantial

monetary reforms prior to attaining enduring stability in 1993. Schönfelder (2005) emphasises that the war-related loss of markets and customers had a significant impact on the Croatian economy, most notably in the tourism sector, as international visitors avoided the region due to the perception of it being a "permanent danger zone". This perception engendered an institutional isolation that prolonged Croatia's recovery for years following the cessation of hostilities.

Ukraine's current economic trajectory demonstrates a fundamental departure from historical patterns of isolation and command-based stagnation. While the initial institutional reports from the OECD in 2022 conveyed a profound sense of pessimism, anticipating the "crystallisation of vulnerabilities" and a prospective surge in corporate defaults and bank failures, subsequent empirical observations from 2024 and 2025 have depicted a contrasting reality (OECD, 2022). Research by Uygur and Peyravi (2025) has identified that businesses in Ukraine and the Baltic region have utilised "creative mechanisms of survival", demonstrating an extreme form of adaptability through the rapid realignment of supply chains and the adoption of alternative energy solutions to maintain production capacity even under direct infrastructure pressure. This resilience is particularly evident in the manufacturing, energy, and agriculture sectors, where firms have transitioned from survival-oriented tactics to long-term sustainability planning and innovation (Uygur & Peyravi, 2025).

A pivotal factor in this divergence is the role of "Investor Sentiment" and its quantifiable impact on market connectedness. A working paper by the European Central Bank (Bouteska et al., 2025) reveals that during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, sentiment-induced connectedness across European financial markets exhibited a marked increase in strength in comparison with periods of stability. The ECB's research found that investor sentiment – defined as psychological attitudes and reactions that deviate from rational fundamental factors – was a primary driver of market fluctuations. Sentiment shocks propagated through the European financial network at an unprecedented speed. Shiller's (2017) "Narrative Economics" provides an essential theoretical framework for understanding this mechanism. If the narrative of a region's reconstruction is strong and widespread enough, it can stabilise the market

by preventing negative sentiment from triggering total capital flight. This effectively anchors the market around a long-term developmental story (Bouteska et al., 2025). As analysed by Andriienko (2024), the structural transition towards eco-industrial clusters operationalises this narrative by aligning domestic recovery with UNIDO's international green development standards. This transformation of the abstract concept of "Great Reconstruction" into a technical reality reinforces investor confidence through demonstrable resource efficiency and sustainability.

The integration of European institutional standards also acts as an "institutional accelerator", distinguishing the Ukrainian case from historical precedents. Ukraine's status as an EU candidate has driven the rapid "Europeanisation" of its legal and industrial frameworks – a process that lacked institutional anchorage during the early years of the Croatian conflict. This institutional anchor is further strengthened by Ukraine becoming the first European country to adopt a national standard for eco-industrial parks. This provides a regulatory basis for scaling up green industrial models in line with EU policies (Andriienko, 2025). This process gives international investors the regulatory predictability they need to integrate Ukrainian industries into European value chains as part of the broader "nearshoring" strategy (Reinert, 2025). According to reports from Brainhub (2025), Ukraine is a leading destination for nearshoring. It offers a large talent pool and significantly lower operational costs, while maintaining business etiquette and cultural alignment with the EU market. This institutional coupling creates a 'multiplier effect' for confidence, whereby the path to membership guarantees the safety and viability of long-term industrial projects.

The relationship between housing and industrial infrastructure is also a topic covered in urban resilience literature. Some researchers suggest that, in environments where market incentives are ineffective, behavioural interventions such as anchoring can improve performance and adoption in infrastructure sectors. The characteristics of a property's surroundings can be invaluable in assessing the economic and social value of houses following significant neighbourhood changes. In the context of conflict-affected countries, which often exhibit a significant lag in attracting infrastructure development, the emergence of a "stability triangle" provides a unique opportunity

for strategic planning. The present study investigates the phenomenon of residential development in proximity to industrial parks in Ukraine, with the objective of formulating recommendations for the development of strategies that are oriented towards sustainable development and the creation of new employment opportunities (Journal of Economic Analysis, 2024). This synergy is supported by the Ukraine Industrial Recovery Programme 2024–2028, which emphasises the integration of industrial hubs with social infrastructure, creating a "psychological anchor" for the population and a stable environment for long-term capital placement (UNIDO, 2024).

3. Methodology

The methodology of this study is grounded in a rigorous statistical analysis of official longitudinal data covering the pre-conflict, pandemic, and active-war periods from 2020 to 2024. The empirical foundation of the research is constituted by two primary datasets, which facilitate a granular perspective on regional economic activity and the evolution of the industrial landscape. The initial dataset encompasses official figures from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (2020–2024) concerning the aggregate floor area of residential buildings that have been commissioned. The second dataset is derived from the official State Register of Industrial Parks, obtained from the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine and the Unified State Open Data Portal (2025). A cross-referencing of these datasets was undertaken to identify potential correlations between social infrastructure (housing) and industrial capacity (parks).

The central analytical framework employed is that of Leading Indicator Analysis. In macroeconomic theory, a leading indicator is defined as a measurable economic factor that changes before the economy begins to exhibit a specific pattern or trend, thereby effectively signalling turning points in the business cycle (Investopedia, 2024). Whilst conventional leading indicators encompass metrics such as building permits or consumer confidence indices, our bespoke model assesses the hypothesis that residential construction completions function as a predictor for industrial park development in conflict-prone regions. The present study examines the lag effect, whereby the stabilisation and visual confirmation of housing completion

in specific regional clusters – notably in the Lviv-Kyiv-Zakarpattia "stability triangle" – precedes the formal registration and infrastructure investment in industrial parks by a period of approximately 6 to 12 months. This methodology is grounded in the behavioural principle of "selective accessibility", which suggests that in environments of high uncertainty, investors prioritise visually confirmed information about a community's survival and growth capacity when making long-term capital commitments to manufacturing projects (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974).

In order to account for the high level of financial integration and volatility in the European region, the study utilises Generalised Forecast Error Variance Decomposition (GEFVD), a technique employed by recent ECB studies to identify how shocks in one sector may be transmitted to others (Bouteska et al., 2025). This methodological approach facilitates the measurement of the "net spillover" effect, thereby enabling the identification of whether the housing sector functions as a net transmitter of stability to the industrial sector. Finally, to ensure methodological rigor and to account for the systemic shock of the February 2022 invasion, the Iterative Cumulative Sum of Squares (ICSS) approach is utilised. This methodology facilitates the identification of structural breaks in economic time-series data, thereby enabling the isolation of the volatility associated with the initial conflict shock and subsequent analysis of the recovery phase as a distinct economic regime characterised by narrative-driven stabilisation.

Furthermore, statistical processing incorporates spatial analysis to ascertain regional concentration and identify gaps in development. It is imperative to comprehend the westward drift of production capacities in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject. The utilisation of secondary data from industry reports and government sources circumvents the complexities and biases inherent in primary data collection in conflict zones. The stated methodology provides a comprehensive overview of the research progress, enabling other scientists to replicate the study utilising the same materials and methods.

4. Results

A thorough statistical analysis of residential construction dynamics in Ukraine reveals a dramatic V-shaped recovery following the initial systemic shock caused by the 2022 invasion. According to

official data from the State Statistics Service, the total floor area of housing buildings commissioned reached a peak of 11,434 thousand square metres in 2021 before experiencing a sharp contraction of 37.8% in 2022, falling to 7,110 thousand square metres. However, the industry demonstrated a significant adaptive surge in 2024, with total commissioning reaching 9,759 thousand square metres, representing a substantial growth rate of 21.1% compared to 2023. This resurgence signifies that the construction sector has effectively assimilated the prevailing security environment and is demonstrating a dynamic response to the demands engendered by substantial internal migration and the pervasive discourse of reconstruction.

The registration of industrial parks (IPs) has followed a remarkably similar growth trajectory during this same period. While only 9 IPs were registered during the period of peak uncertainty in 2022, this figure rose to 13 in 2023 and surged to an absolute historical record of 32 new registrations in 2024 (VoxUkraine, 2025). As of early 2025, the national register included 100 industrial facilities, which collectively encompassed approximately 3,000 hectares of territory. This record-breaking activity in 2024 is consistent with the "psychological anchor" hypothesis, which posits that the stabilisation of the housing market in 2023 provided the visual evidence of community survival that preceded industrial park infrastructure investment in the subsequent year. The regional distribution of these facilities is indicative of a strategic "drift to the west", with economic activity concentrating in the relatively safer hubs of Lviv, Kyiv, and Zakarpattia. The Lviv region currently leads the nation with 19 registered IPs, followed by the Kyiv region with 13 and the Zakarpattia region with 10.

As demonstrated by financial data from the Ministry of Economy, government support for the industrial park sector amounted to 900.68 million UAH in 2025, encompassing 22 infrastructure projects across 13 distinct parks. Key projects receiving state incentives included the construction of internal networks for the "KYT" park in the Kyiv region (147.7 million UAH) and a cogeneration unit for "Kronospan Rivne" in the Rivne region (55.3 million UAH). It is evident that such investments are distinguished by a significant multiplier effect, whereby statistical data indicates that for every 1 UAH invested in public industrial

infrastructure, approximately 5 to 6 UAH in private capital is attracted (UBN News, 2025). This leverage ratio positions industrial parks as effective magnets for capital in a high-risk environment, transforming them from mere policy concepts into visible platforms for implementing the "Made in Ukraine" strategy.

The effectiveness of these parks is also measured by the number of jobs they create. Statistics show that, on average, one hectare of park creates 50 new jobs. By the end of 2025, 37 industrial enterprises had been built or were under construction inside industrial parks, creating 3,716 jobs. These enterprises are involved in practical, export-capable manufacturing, including agri-food processing, woodworking, and mechanical engineering. These results suggest that industrial parks are becoming a consistent entry route for manufacturing, converting complex greenfield projects into more bankable profiles for international investors.

5. Discussion

The accelerated growth of industrial and residential indicators in Ukraine must be comprehended within the broader context of the European Union's evolving pursuit of "Open Strategic Autonomy". In the context of ongoing reconfiguration of global supply chains in response to geopolitical instability, European firms are undertaking a re-evaluation of their sourcing and manufacturing strategies with a view to risk mitigation. This has resulted in a substantial transition from conventional offshoring to nearshoring and friendshoring. The geographical proximity of Ukraine to the EU border, in conjunction with the existing "transport visa-free" agreement, provides a uniquely stable logistical framework for this transition. As Brainhub (2025) demonstrate, even during the most intense phases of conflict, 96% of IT and manufacturing contracts in Ukraine remained secure. This is indicative of the high operational reliability of the region, even under extreme duress.

Utilising these empirical findings, the present study proposes the conceptualisation of the "Industrial Fortress" as an analytical model for conflict-zone industrial development. In contradistinction to conventional export-processing zones that prioritise purely fiscal incentives, the Industrial Fortress is conceptualised as a "safety capsule" that integrates physical security with energy and social autonomy. The

concept under discussion is characterised by a set of key attributes. These include modular protective solutions, such as high-tech, ballistic-grade safety shelters located directly on production lines. The purpose of these shelters is to minimise downtime for the workforce during security alerts. Moreover, the model places emphasis on energy independence through the integration of on-site cogeneration units and renewable energy sources, thereby ensuring the uninterrupted continuation of manufacturing operations during periods of national grid instability (Ministry of Economy, 2025). This assertion is further substantiated by the substantial investment of 13.8 billion UAH that has already been allocated to infrastructure development across 35 parks.

The social dimension of the Industrial Fortress is equally important for its potential success. The proximity of these industrial parks to new residential developments, which the statistical analysis identified as areas of significant housing growth (21.1% in 2024), serves to anchor human capital. The model aims to create a 'repeatability' mechanism that compresses the time-to-market for international residents and provides a more "bankable" project profile for foreign investment funds by providing workers with both high-quality employment and modern places of residence within a localised, secure perimeter (Good Time Invest, 2025). Transforming an industrial zone into a comprehensive social and economic ecosystem is essential for overcoming the "danger zone" perception that has historically slowed the recovery of post-war economies such as Croatia's.

Finally, the industrial development taking place in these parks is closely aligned with the trade priorities identified by the Federation of Employers of Ukraine for 2025. These parks are increasingly hosting enterprises capable of producing high-value goods that can replace Russian and Belarusian imports to the EU, particularly in the chemicals, machinery, and processed food sectors. These priorities correspond to sections 02–21, 28–38 and 84–85 of the UKT ZED classification (Federation of Employers of Ukraine, 2025). By localising the production of these high-tech and processed goods, Ukraine is not only fuelling its own reconstruction, but also providing the EU with the

critical materials necessary for its green transition and ensuring the security of its long-term supply chains. This synergy between Ukrainian industrial capacity and European strategic requirements paves the way for sustainable economic integration.

6. Conclusions

Analysing Ukraine's economic dynamics and structural shifts during the current conflict yields several conclusions with both theoretical and practical implications. Firstly, Robert Shiller's Narrative Economics is a robust framework that can be used to explain Ukraine's economic survival. The "Great Reconstruction" narrative stabilises investor expectations and counteracts the psychological paralysis that is typical of conflict zones. Secondly, the residential housing market consistently acts as a psychological anchor and leading indicator. For example, the 21.1% surge in completions in 2024 preceded a record increase in industrial park registrations. This spatial correlation highlights the need for integrated planning of social and industrial infrastructure. Thirdly, Ukraine's status as an EU candidate has created an institutional acceleration effect, enabling a pace of regulatory and industrial adaptation that is significantly faster than that observed in historical precedents, such as Croatia.

Fourthly, the proposed 'Industrial Fortress' concept offers a comprehensive model for manufacturing resilience in high-risk environments. By integrating physical safety, energy independence and social connectivity, it transforms industrial parks from fiscal instruments into secure nodes in global supply chains. Fifthly, Ukraine is positioned as an indispensable strategic partner for the European Union. It offers a safe and efficient nearshoring hub that can substitute for geopolitically risky imports and secure the EU's supply chains, while also fostering broader regional stability. Future research should focus on the impact of "green" criteria and ESG ratings on the long-term viability of these industrial clusters during the post-conflict reconstruction phase. The results obtained could inform state policy and attract international investment through the development of industrial and innovation clusters.

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