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The State Policy Life Cycle in the Defence Domain

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Abstract. The relevance of the research is determined by the growing role of state policies in the field of defence under the conditions of martial law, a dynamic security environment and limited resources, which necessitates improving the quality of managerial decision-making and ensuring its adaptability. Under such conditions, state policy should be considered not as a set of fragmented decisions or regulatory legal acts, but as an integral and continuous managerial process with a clearly defined logic of development and feedback mechanisms. The aim of the article is to substantiate a universal model of the life cycle of state policy in the field of defence and to determine its main stages, taking into account the specific features of the formulation and implementation of policies falling within the competence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine. The article employs system and

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process approaches, structural-functional analysis, methods of analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, as well as elements of comparative and risk-oriented analysis, which made it possible to consider state policy in the field of defence as a multi-stage life cycle. The main results of the research consist in substantiating a universal model of the life cycle of state policy in the field of defence, distinguishing its principal stages – from goal-setting and policy initiation to monitoring and evaluation of outcomes – and demonstrating the decisive role of feedback in ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of defence policies. It is shown that the effectiveness of the policies of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine largely depends on the coherence of all stages of the life cycle and on the ability of the management system to engage in institutional learning and timely adjustment of managerial decisions. The results of the research may be of interest to officials of public administration bodies in the field of national security and defence, specialists of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine and the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, researchers and academic staff in the field of public administration and military security, as well as analysts and experts involved in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of defence policies.

Keywords: state policy, policy life cycle, defence policy, public administration, Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, monitoring and evaluation, feedback.

Introduction

Under the contemporary conditions of transformation of the national security and defence system of Ukraine, particular importance is attached to improving the quality of public administration in the field of defence. The full-scale armed aggression of the russian federation, the prolonged regime of martial law, as well as the need simultaneously to conduct combat operations and implement profound institutional reforms, determine increasing requirements for the soundness, coherence and adaptability of state policies in the security and defence sector. Under such conditions, state policy cannot be regarded solely as a set of regulatory legal acts or one-off managerial decisions, but requires consideration as an integral and continuous managerial process.

In the public administration theory, the process approach is becoming increasingly widespread, according to which state policy is interpreted through the prism of its life cycle – from the emergence of a problem and the formulation of a goal to implementation, monitoring, evaluation of outcomes and subsequent adjustment. Such an approach makes it possible to analyse systematically the logic of policy development, to identify internal linkages between its stages, and also to assess the effectiveness of managerial decisions not in isolation but in the context of their impact on the achievement of strategic objectives.

For the defence domain, the state policy life cycle is of fundamental importance, since defence policies are implemented under conditions of high uncertainty, limited resources, a dynamic security environment and constant influence of external threats. In addition, Ministry of Defence of Ukraine (MoD of Ukraine) policies are, as a rule, interagency in nature, rely on a complex system of strategic documents and require coordination between military, political, economic and legal components. In the absence of a clearly structured life cycle with feedback mechanisms, such policies lose manageability, which leads to the accumulation of systemic errors and reduced effectiveness.

In this context, the scientific task of conceptualising the state policy life cycle in the defence domain as an integral managerial loop becomes particularly relevant. Such a loop covers all key stages – from goal-setting to monitoring and evaluation of outcomes – and ensures feedback at each phase. Formalisation of this approach creates methodological prerequisites for improving public administration quality in the defence domain, as well as for introducing institutional learning and adaptation principles into the MoD of Ukraine activities.

The aim of this article is to substantiate a universal model of the state policy life cycle in the defence domain and to determine its key stages, taking into account specific features of policy

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formulation and implementation entrusted to Ministry of Defence of Ukraine. Achieving this aim involves systematic analysis of policy cycle logic, managerial decision role at each stage and feedback mechanism significance for ensuring defence policy effectiveness and sustainability.

Literature Review

State policy life cycle issues constitute one of the key topics in contemporary public administration theory, since they make it possible to consider policy not as a one-off act of decision-making but as a continuous managerial process that covers problem formulation, decision development, implementation, monitoring and outcome evaluation followed by subsequent adjustment [1, 2]. Such an approach creates a methodological basis for analysing state policy effectiveness in complex and dynamic domains, in particular in the defence domain.

In classical works on state policy analysis, the life cycle is described as a sequence of functionally interconnected stages, each characterised by its own instruments, actors and managerial decision quality criteria [1, 3]. At the same time, contemporary research emphasises that linear interpretation of policy cycle is methodologically limited, since it does not take into account feedback presence, process iterativity and policy capacity for adaptation under changing external environment conditions [2, 4]

For the defence domain, such iterativity is of critical importance. Defence policies are formulated and implemented under conditions of high uncertainty, constant transformation of the security environment and significant resource constraints, which requires regular revision of goals, instruments and implementation mechanisms [5, 6]. Defence management literature stresses that the absence of a formalised cycle with clearly defined stages and feedback mechanisms leads to policy fragmentation, a gap between strategic goals and practical outcomes, as well as reduced resource use efficiency [6, 7].

A significant proportion of defence management research is focused on analysing capability planning and development processes which, by their logic, are also cyclical in nature. In particular, within defence planning processes of NATO member states, the policy life cycle is integrated with multi-year cycles of requirement definition, target allocation, implementation and outcome review [8]. The NATO Defence Planning Process is considered an example of an institutionalised cycle in which political decisions, resource constraints and outcome evaluation are combined within a single managerial loop [8, 9].

A separate body of scholarly works is devoted to state policy implementation issues, where it is emphasised that this particular life cycle phase is most vulnerable to managerial disruptions [3, 10]. In the defence domain, this is manifested in the complexity of coordination between numerous actors, institutional inertia, limited capacity for rapid adaptation and the high cost of managerial errors [6, 10]. In this regard, researchers underline the need to integrate mechanisms of ongoing control and action adjustment directly into policy implementation process [5, 7.

A significant place in contemporary literature is occupied by issues of state policy monitoring and evaluation as instruments for ensuring accountability, effectiveness and institutional learning [11]. OECD recommendations define policy evaluation as systematic and objective analysis of its design, implementation and outcomes with the aim of improving managerial decision quality and adjusting policies on an evidence-based basis [11, 12]. For defence policies, this has particular importance, since it makes it possible to distinguish between achievement of planned outcomes and efficiency of limited resource use [9, 12].

In Ukrainian scholarly and regulatory discourse, state policy life cycle issues are considered mainly in a fragmented manner – through separate planning, implementation or evaluation elements. At the same time, in methodological documents and policy preparation practices for public authorities, in particular in the security and defence domain, process approach use with structured “policy description”, goal system and indicator framework is gradually becoming established [5, 12].

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This creates prerequisites for scientific formalisation of a universal state policy life cycle model in the defence domain, adapted to specific features of the MoD of Ukraine activities.

Thus, the analysis of scholarly and applied sources indicates the existence of a sufficient theoretical basis for considering state policy as a cyclical managerial process. At the same time, defence domain specificity highlights the need to generalise and systematise existing approaches in order to build an integral state policy life cycle model in the defence domain, which determines the direction of further research.

Methodological Framework

The methodological basis of the research consists of a set of general scientific and specialised methods that ensure the analysis of the state policy life cycle in the defence domain as an integral, multi-stage managerial process. The method selection is determined by defence domain complexity, multi-level management system structure and the need to combine theoretical generalisation with analysis of the MoD of Ukraine practice.

At the stage of goal-setting and state policy initiation, a system approach and a scientific abstraction method were applied, which made it possible to consider policy as an element of a broader national security and defence system, as well as to identify key problems requiring political intervention.

For the state policy formulation stage, process and structural-functional approaches are fundamental. They made it possible to formalise policy internal logic, determine managerial action sequence and define role and functions of main actors at different management levels. A synthesis method was used to develop a generalised policy life cycle model suitable for application to various defence activity domains.

At the political decision-making and policy implementation stage, managerial process analysis methods and results-oriented approach were applied, which made it possible to assess policy goal coherence with available resources and institutional capacities. Elements of the risk-oriented approach were used to take into account uncertainty influence and external threat impact on policy implementation course.

For the monitoring and evaluation stage, comparative analysis and generalisation methods were applied, which ensured assessment of policy effectiveness, resource use efficiency and feedback generation for managerial decision adjustment. This made it possible to consider monitoring and evaluation not as policy completion but as a mechanism for transition to a new development cycle.

An applied methodological toolkit ensures comprehensive research of the state policy life cycle in the defence domain and creates scientific prerequisites for practical use of the proposed model in activities within the MoD of Ukraine.

Results and Discussions

Within a contemporary public administration theory, the state policy is increasingly considered not as a set of fragmented managerial decisions or regulatory legal acts but as an integral process characterised by its own development logic, internal structure and feedback mechanisms [13]. Such an approach is of particular relevance in the defence domain, where policies are implemented under conditions of high uncertainty, limited resources and constant influence of external threats.

The state policy life cycle in the defence domain should be interpreted as an institutionalised managerial loop that combines state strategic objectives, mechanisms for their transformation into practical decisions and an evaluation system for achieved outcomes. Such a loop is not fixed once and for all but operates in a mode of continuous clarification and adaptation, which is of fundamental importance for the MoD of Ukraine policies under martial law conditions and long-term transformation of the security and defence sector.

The state policy life cycle universality consists in the fact that, regardless of substantive domain

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(personnel, resource, technological, organisational or regulatory), policy passes through the same basic stages. Differences between policies lie not in cycle logic itself but in the content, instruments and managerial mechanisms that fill each stage.

The methodological recommendations by the MoD of Ukraine, in particular regarding "policy description" development [14], in fact establish precisely such a cyclical understanding of policy, although it is not always formalised as a single conceptual model. In this context, scientific task consists in systematising existing approaches and presenting the state policy life cycle as a universal analytical framework suitable for application to all policies whose formulation and implementation are entrusted to the MoD of Ukraine.

A key characteristic of such a framework is feedback presence at each cycle stage, which distinguishes contemporary policy management approaches from traditional linear models in which policy implementation was regarded as final stage. In the defence domain, absence or formal character of feedback inevitably leads to accumulation of systemic errors, inconsistency between objectives and resources and reduced trust in managerial decisions.

The general outline of the state policy life cycle for policies whose formulation and implementation are entrusted to MoD of Ukraine is presented in Figure 1.

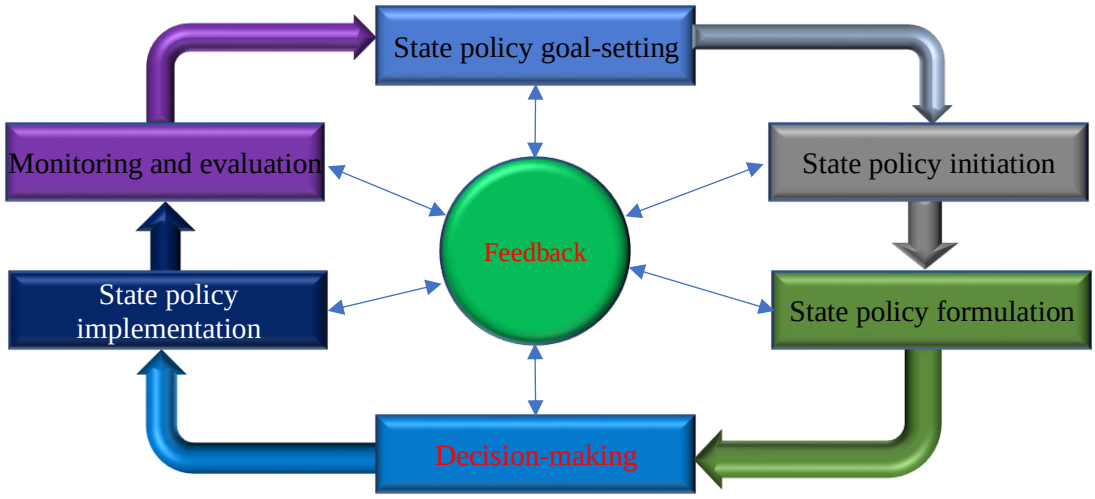


Figure 1. State policy life cycle,
formulation and implementation of which are entrusted to the MoD of Ukraine

Stage 1. State policy goal-setting. The state policy goal-setting stage is not only a starting point of the life cycle but also a key element that determines quality of all subsequent managerial decisions. In the defence domain, a policy goal cannot be formulated in isolation from overall state strategic planning architecture, since any MoD of Ukraine policy derives from national security and defence strategic objectives.

At this stage, a conceptual understanding of the problem requiring political intervention takes place. This involves not only identifying an existing deficit or shortcomings in a particular domain but also achieving a systemic understanding of their causes, interconnections with other policies and possible consequences of inaction. It is precisely here that the boundary is drawn between policies of strategic character and operational response measures that do not form a full-fledged life cycle.

The state policy goal in the defence domain must meet a number of fundamental requirements, namely:

be aligned with higher-level strategic documents, which ensures its legitimacy and political support;

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be sufficiently specific to allow further decomposition into objectives, tasks and performance indicators;

take into account real institutional and resource constraints, which is particularly important under wartime condition.

Feedback at the goal-setting stage is implemented through analysis of previous policy implementation experience, assessment of achieved and unachieved outcomes, as well as through systematic updating of security environment assessments. In international defence planning practice, this stage is often accompanied by scenario analysis use, threat development modelling and assessment of alternative goal formulation options, which makes it possible to reduce the risk of erroneous strategic choice.

Stage 2. State policy initiation. State policy initiation is the stage at which an abstractly formulated goal acquires an organisational and managerial dimension. It is at this point that the transition takes place from strategic intent to a formalised policy development process, which includes identification of responsible actors, procedures, time frames and resource constraints.

For the MoD of Ukraine, policy initiation is, as a rule, associated with decisions of the state leadership, results of strategic or defence reviews, as well as with identified capability gaps following comprehensive analysis. It is important to emphasise that policy initiation presupposes conscious recognition of a problem as one that cannot be resolved within existing mechanisms.

At this stage, initial institutional policy model is formed: range of internal and external stakeholders is determined, their roles and authorities are outlined, and coordination and decision-making principles are established. Errors made at the initiation stage tend to be reproduced at all subsequent life cycle stages, which makes this stage critically important from managerial quality perspective.

Feedback during the initiation process is manifested through clarification of the problem field, revision of initial assumptions and adjustment of process participant composition. If the absence of the necessary institutional capacity or a sufficient resource base is identified, the initiation of the policy may be suspended or returned to the stage of the objective revision.

Stage 3. State policy formulation. A state policy formulation stage is the central and methodologically most substantive phase of the life cycle, since it is at this stage that a strategically defined goal is transformed into a structured set of objectives, tasks, instruments and implementation mechanisms. For the MoD of Ukraine policies, this stage is particularly complex due to the defence domain multidimensional nature, interagency decision character and high requirements for coherence with national and international state commitments.

Policy formulation should not be equated with preparation of a single document. It is a process of analytical, organisational and managerial design of policy as an integral system. At this stage, problem specification takes place, alternative decision options are developed, their consequences are assessed and the most optimal policy configuration is selected.

An important methodological prerequisite for policy formulation in the defence domain is an application of system approach. The policy is considered not in isolation but as an element of a broader defence management system that includes doctrinal, organisational, personnel, resource, infrastructure and regulatory components.

This stage involves the implementation of several sub-stages (Figure 2).

Policy formulation begins with an in-depth analysis aimed at substantiating the need for political intervention and determining optimal ways of achieving the defined goal. An analytical component includes assessment of current state, identification of gaps and imbalances, analysis of their causes and forecasting consequences of maintaining existing conditions.

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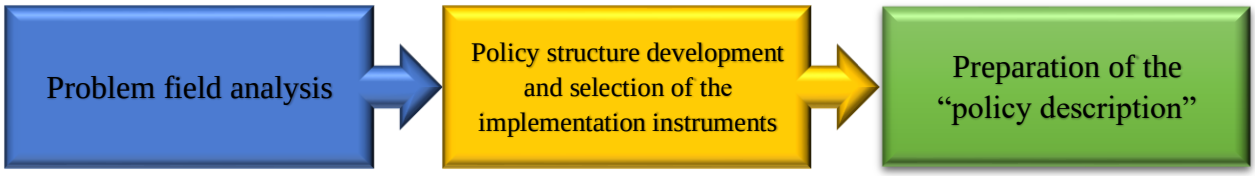


Figure 2. Components of state policy formulation stage

The next step in policy formulation is constructing its internal structure. At this stage, the overall policy goal is decomposed into strategic objectives, specific tasks and expected outcomes. Such decomposition should ensure a logical linkage between the level of strategic intent and the level of practical implementation.

The final result of the formulation stage is preparing the "policy description" – a basic document that records policy content, logic and implementation mechanisms. Policy description performs the role of a reference framework against which all subsequent managerial actions, decisions and effectiveness assessments are aligned.

Feedback in the process of the policy structure formation is manifested through testing logical coherence between objectives, tasks and instruments. If imbalances or internal contradictions are identified, policy is subject to adjustment even before transition to decision-making stage.

Stage 4. Political decision-making. This stage represents a transition from an analytically formulated policy to its official approval and the acquisition of a binding character. For the MoD of Ukraine, this stage has not only managerial but also politico-legal significance, since it is at this point that the policy becomes integrated into the public administration system.

Decision-making presupposes the consideration of the policy by authorised bodies and the assessment of its compliance with current legislation, strategic documents, and budgetary capacities. In this process, an important role is played by the balance between the expert substantiation of the policy and the political expediency of its approval.

The institutional complexity of this stage consists in the multi-level nature of decision-making within the defence domain. Depending on the subject of the policy, decisions may be taken at the level of the Ministry of Defence, the Cabinet of Ministers, the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, or by the higher political leadership of the state. This necessitates the thorough preparation of materials, sound argumentation, and the coordination of positions between different actors.

Feedback at the decision-making stage is implemented through the mechanisms of policy refinement and adjustment following the results of consideration. If critical remarks or inconsistencies are identified, the policy may be returned to the formulation stage for revision, which confirms the non-linear character of the life cycle.

Stage 5. State policy implementation. A state policy implementation stage in the defence domain is the longest, most resource-intensive and managerially complex element of the life cycle. It is at this phase that viability of political decisions developed and approved at previous stages is tested, as well as their capacity to be transformed into practical outcomes under real defence system functioning conditions. Unlike previous stages, policy implementation cannot be regarded as a set of formally defined measures, since it always takes place in a dynamic environment, under conditions of limited resources and influence of external and internal factors.

In the context of the MoD of Ukraine, policy implementation means management of a complex adaptive system that includes numerous governance bodies, military formations, institutions, defence-industrial complex enterprises, as well as external partners and stakeholders. Each of these elements has its own interests, constraints and level of institutional capacity, which significantly affects policy implementation course.

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State policy implementation is not mechanical execution of plans or roadmaps. It presupposes continuous managerial balancing between planned objectives, actual conditions for their achievement and the need for timely response to changes in the security environment. In this sense, policy implementation acquires characteristics of a process of permanent managerial decision-making that adjusts initial policy logic without losing its strategic orientation.

Feedback at the policy implementation stage is of fundamental importance. It is ensured through regular analysis of measure execution, assessment of interim outcomes, as well as through information collection from implementers and final policy beneficiaries. It is precisely at this stage that implicit assumptions not taken into account during policy formulation, as well as systemic constraints preventing achievement of planned objectives without adjustment of approaches, are identified.

Stage 6. Monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation of state policy implementation outcomes constitute the final stage, which at the same time ensures transition to a new management cycle. This stage should be regarded not as a formal procedure of summarising results but as a key mechanism for management system learning and improvement of future policy decision quality.

Monitoring in the defence policy domain consists in systematic collection and analysis of information on policy implementation progress, adherence to timelines, resource use and achievement of interim outcomes. Its main function is timely identification of deviations from planned parameters and ensuring managerial response to such deviations. Monitoring should be continuous and integrated into policy management system rather than reduced to episodic reporting.

Evaluation, unlike monitoring, is aimed at deeper analysis of policy effectiveness and its impact on defence system condition. In this context, evaluation acts as an instrument of strategic reflection that makes it possible to assess adequacy of policy logic itself.

For the MoD of Ukraine, it is particularly important to distinguish between the evaluation of policy effectiveness in terms of results and evaluation of policy efficiency. The former focuses on achievement of defined indicators, whereas the latter concerns the relationship between obtained outcomes and expended resources. The presence of positive outcomes in the absence of efficient resource use cannot be regarded as a fully successful policy.

Feedback generated on the basis of monitoring and evaluation constitutes grounds for decision-making regarding further policy fate. Depending on obtained outcomes, several scenarios are possible: continuation of policy implementation without changes, adjustment of its individual components, revision of the goal or complete termination of policy as one that has lost relevance or proved ineffective.

Thus, monitoring and evaluation do not complete the policy life cycle but rather close it within a managerial loop that ensures the transition to a new cycle of policy formulation or transformation. It is at this stage that the principle of institutional learning is realised, without which the long-term enhancement of the capacity of the defence management system is impossible.

Conclusion

Thus, the article substantiates the expediency of considering state policy in the defence domain as an integral life cycle covering the interconnected stages of goal-setting, initiation, formulation, decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and outcome evaluation. It is shown that the effectiveness of defence policy is determined not by individual managerial decisions but by the quality of the organisation of the entire cycle and the presence of feedback at each of its stages.

The proposed universal model of the state policy life cycle makes it possible to systematise the approaches to the formulation and implementation of the policies of the MoD of Ukraine, ensures the coherence between strategic objectives and resource capacities, and increases the manageability of the political process under the conditions of a dynamic security environment. The practical

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significance of the obtained results lies in the possibility of using the proposed model as an analytical tool for the evaluation of current defence policies, their adjustment, and the development of new managerial decisions, taking into account the principles of adaptability and institutional learning.

Recommendations

The article materials may be of practical and scholarly interest to the officials of public administration bodies in the national security and defence domain, in particular to the senior leadership and specialists of the MoD of Ukraine and the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine involved in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of state defence policies; to researchers and academic staff in the fields of public administration, military security, and defence management; as well as to the analysts of the security and defence sector, strategic planning experts, and the specialists in capability development and defence institution reform who use process- and results-oriented approaches in their activities.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests related to the subject of the article.

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Життєвий цикл державної політики у сфері оборони

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Анотація. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена зростанням ролі державних політик у сфері оборони в умовах воєнного стану, динамічного безпекового середовища та обмежених ресурсів, що потребує підвищення якості управлінських рішень і забезпечення їхньої адаптивності. У таких умовах державна політика має розглядатися не як сукупність розрізнених рішень або нормативно-правових актів, а як цілісний, безперервний управлінський процес із чітко визначеною логікою розвитку та механізмами зворотного зв’язку. Метою статті є обґрунтування універсальної моделі життєвого циклу державної політики у сфері оборони та визначення її основних етапів з урахуванням особливостей формування і реалізації політик, що належать до компетенції Міністерства оборони України. У статті використано системний і процесний підходи, структурно-функціональний аналіз, методи аналізу та синтезу, індукції й дедукції, елементи порівняльного та ризик-орієнтованого аналізу, що дозволило розглянути державну політику у сфері оборони як багатоетапний життєвий цикл. Основні результати дослідження полягають в обґрунтуванні універсальної моделі життєвого циклу державної політики у сфері оборони, виокремленні його ключових етапів – від визначення мети та ініціювання політики до моніторингу й оцінювання

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результатів – та доведенні визначальної ролі зворотного зв'язку для забезпечення результативності й стійкості оборонних політик. Показано, що ефективність політик Міністерства оборони України значною мірою залежить від узгодженості всіх етапів життєвого циклу та здатності системи управління до інституційного навчання і своєчасного коригування управлінських рішень. Результати дослідження можуть бути цікавими для посадових осіб органів державного управління у сфері національної безпеки і оборони, фахівців Міністерства оборони України та Генерального штабу Збройних Сил України, наукових і науково-педагогічних працівників у галузі державного управління та воєнної безпеки, а також для аналітиків і експертів, залучених до формування, реалізації та оцінювання оборонних політик.

Ключові слова: державна політика, життєвий цикл політики, оборонна політика, державне управління, Міністерство оборони України, моніторинг і оцінювання, зворотний зв'язок.