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METHODOLOGY OF STUDYING INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC PROCESSES: CONTEXT OF THE PREPARATION OF UKRAINE'S POST-WAR ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROGRAMME

Abstract

The article discusses the issues of the methodology of studying of international relations on the example of the preparation of the Programme for the Post-War Economic Recovery of Ukraine. Since the preparation of such a programme includes a preliminary determination of the potential place of Ukraine in the new global economy, the consideration of international geo-economic relations in such a programme is quite logical. This brings forth the problem of using modern methods to study such relationships. Considering the general problems of this topic, the author focuses on the methodological approaches to the study of the strategy of the activities of international financial groups in the Ukrainian market in the conditions of post-war recovery of the economy. This is one of the research components aimed at determining the potential place of Ukraine in the global economy. In particular, the author provides his own definition of international financial groups and highlights changes and adjustments that should be made and used in connection with a non-standard situation caused by both the Coronavirus pandemic and war against Ukraine.

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Problem Statement

The preparation of the program for the post-war economic revival of Ukraine, in addition to the problems of assessing the losses suffered and determining the priorities of further economic development, also acutely raises the question of the state's role in managing the economy and Ukraine's participation in the process of globalization. Globalization permeates all spheres of social life deeply. Moreover, the process of globalization does not develop linearly, so instead of talking of «states dying», we should acknowledge that *in the conditions of modern globalization the state is losing its right to irresponsibility not only on a national, but also on a global scale.* This, in turn, determines the need for a clear understanding and scientific substantiation of the regularities in the development of the modern economy, without which it is impossible to ensure the foreign economic success of the state.

At the end of September 2021, leading Ukrainian scientists in the field of international economics discussed this problem during the work of a special discussion platform organized by the Institute of Economics and Forecasting of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. The discussion resulted in the suggestion to take a number of concrete steps to improve information and analytical work in the field of international economic relations, which are based on foreign experience (in particular, institutions such as the Peterson Institute for International Economics (Washington), The Royal Institute of International Affairs – Chatham House (London), Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych (Warsaw), etc.), to deepen the connections of scientific research with the real needs of authorities, find new sources of funding, etc.

Unfortunately, this work was interrupted by Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. However, subsequent events included the introduction of international economic sanctions against Russia, the provision of international financial assistance to Ukraine, the development of a mechanism for international financing of the post-war economic revival of Ukraine. All this has proved the **increased needs of the state government institutions** (first of all, the Office of the President of Ukraine) regarding their information and analytical support on issues of international economic relations.

This is due, first of all, to the high level of qualification of the full-time services of state authorities, who themselves possess significant amounts of information and the necessary experience for their analysis. In this regard, they need additional advice from independent experts to prepare specific decisions in the field of foreign economic relations. Such advice includes *reviews and recommendations based on* ***scientific analysis*** of not only (and not so much) media reports and editions of domestic and foreign specialized publications, but also of *the results of international negotiations and scientific and practical forums, as well as operational official information of the relevant state bodies, taking into account the position and opinions of foreign partners on given problems (expressed in primary foreign sources of information and during official negotiations or informal discussions)*.

Scientific understanding of the new paradigm of the world economy is very important both from a theoretical and (perhaps more so) practical point of view. After all, such relatively old concepts as statism, Keynesianism, protectionism, and conversely, neoliberalism, monetarism or the so-called Washington Consensus do not give the desired results, or do not work at all. This once again confirms that the ***development of practical recommendations requires a thorough scientific substantiation based on a historical approach and the interrelationship of economic, political and humanitarian phenomena, and, therefore, a real scientific methodology.***

Literature Review

Ontology deals with the study of existence as such, which gives rise to a specific view of the possibility of perception and its sources (i.e., epistemology), as well as a methodology («logic of scientific research») of perceiving certain branches of existence. In the social sciences, ontology allows us to understand not just the reality of social existence, but also the extent to which it has a solid existence independent from researchers. Whether it is merely a fluid and constructed result of human perception and claims about it (Lacatus et al., 2015). However, international relations have their own methodological principles, in particular the change in the spatial and temporal characteristics of political and economic processes at the national, regional and global levels, largely due to the blurring of the boundaries between internal and external in political and, especially, economic life in recent years. This, in turn, leads not only to a change in the concepts of *centre* and *periphery* (key for yesterday's mainstream concept of world-systems), but also to a revision of several basic categories of international life, including state sovereignty (this especially applies to economic and monetary sovereignty) (Sharov, 2020).

Moreover, development of methodology usually concerns international relations as a whole, without distinguishing international *economic* relations separately. At the same time, in connection with certain features, their development requires the involvement of methodical means of economic science. As for the latter, the well-known American specialist in the field of the methodology of economic sciences, Professor L. Boland (2005), believes that most methodological debates in economics concern the criteria that must be used to choose between competing theories. He notes that Regarding the superiority of one theory over another, conventionalism urges us to choose the theory that is one of the following: (i) simpler, (ii) more general, (iii) more testable (iv) more falsifiable, (v) more corroborated, or (vi) less unconfirmed (Boland, 2005). For followers of Friedman's instrumentalism, i.e. economists interested only in solving practical problems, the confirmation criterion, (v), should probably be more important, but usually instrumentalism can simply try every theory until one is found that works regardless of these criteria (Boland, 2005).

It is often believed that in the field of international economic relations, the application of theoretical methods is possible only on the basis of material obtained empirically. That is, the methodology itself is considered only in the narrow sense of methods of empirical testing of hypotheses for correspondence with reality. However, in its broadest definition, methodology refers to the process that creates science. Even if this science cannot be verified in accordance with reality; for many reasons, which may include the belief that there is no neutral or independent existence of reality against which it can be tested (Abou Samra, 2021). Ultimately, what one considers to be *science* and what one accepts as *theory* is a product of what one believes, epistemologically, ontologically, and consequently methodologically. Methodology produces theories that ultimately produce or use research approaches or methods that answer the question of the specific steps a researcher needs to take in order to obtain an answer to their research question (Abou Samra, 2021).

Thus, the methodology of international research in a broad sense should include both actual study and theoretical understanding. The latter becomes possible thanks to general scientific theoretical methods: analysis, synthesis, generalization, abstraction, induction, etc.

Considering the methods of researching international (including economic) relations, two main directions become apparent: the traditionalist-behaviouralist and post-behaviouralist direction, and the positivist and post-positivist direction.

Of course, talking about behaviourism (in both its stages) it is necessary to mention the systemic approach of David Easton (1917 – 2014), who introduced the concept of *political system* as a set of interactions through which valued things are distributed in society (Easton, 1965). It seems that a similar approach can be applied to the concept of *economic system*, especially if we are talking about the international economic system, which has very close internal connections with the political system (Sharov, 2021).

These questions are described in sufficient detail in numerous scientific works on research methodology, and therefore we will highlight only one of them (which considers different approaches), namely the book *Designing Social Research* (2000) by N. Blaikie. To begin with, Norman Blaikie makes a clear distinction between methodology and other aspects of the research process that are often implied when someone uses this blanket term. Thus, Blaikie uses the term *research design* to denote the process of planning a research project, the term *research strategy* in relation to the logic of conducting research, and the term *methods* for the project implementation stage. *Methodology* includes a critical evaluation of alternative research strategies and methods (Blaikie, 2000). Further, he notes that research strategies provide a logic, or set of procedures, for answering research questions and distinguishes four different alternatives – inductive, deductive, retroductive and abductive strategies. An inductive research strategy is a commonly accepted view of how scientists do their work. According to this view, careful objective observation and measurement, as well as careful and accurate data analysis, are necessary for making scientific discoveries (Blaikie, 2000). Deductive research, also known as the «hypothetic-deductive method» or «falsificationism», was developed by Popper in order to overcome the shortcomings of positivism and the inductive strategy (Blaikie, 2000). Deductive research includes the formulation of a hypothesis and corresponding conclusions. Collecting the necessary data to verify the conclusions and their subsequent refutation or confirmation. The retroductive strategy is research logic belonging to the philosophical approach of scientific realism. Like deductive research, it «... also begins with observed regularities, but aims to find a different type of explanation. In this strategy, explanation is found by establishing the actual underlying structure or mechanism responsible for producing the observed pattern ... Retroduction uses creative imagination and analogy to reason backwards – from data to explanation» (Blaikie, 2000). The fourth research strategy, called N. Blaikie's abduction, is associated with a wide range of interpretivist approaches. It is mostly employed in social sciences, while the first three strategies combine natural and social sciences. According to Blaikie (2000), «the idea of abduction refers to the process used to generate social scientific results from the opinions of social actors in order to derive technical concepts and theories from basic concepts and interpretations of social life». The fundamental differences between certain schools of thought are clearly determined by N. Blaikie: positivists are focused on establishing fundamental models (patterns) or relationships of social life, while critical rationalists are concerned with using such models to form explanatory arguments. However, interpretivists claim that statistical patterns or correlations cannot be understood on their own and it is necessary to divine the meanings (motives) people invest in actions that lead to such models (Blaikie, 2000).

A well-known British professor M. Baker (2000) carried out a broad overview of issues related to the choice of research design, that is, with the choice of the method and approach necessary to solve a certain problem and identified some general principles. «The first principle is that research is usually initiated because our current knowledge and experience appear insufficient or unsatisfactory to explain an issue of importance to us … The second principle is that in formulating hypotheses and developing these into testable propositions we would be well advised first to use observation to see if we can discover an acceptable explanation … The third principle is that just as one proceeds from observation, to experimentation to sample survey so one should first undertake qualitative research before attempting to quantify the direction and extent of any hypothesised relationships» (Baker, 2000, p. 395).

Research Results

This directly concerns the methodological problems of studying phenomena and links related to the programme of post-war economic revival of Ukraine. In particular, the study of the problem *strategy of activities of international financial groups on the Ukrainian market in the conditions of post-war economic recovery* should be a systematic and thorough examination of existing information on the given topic. It should include such stages as posing a scientific question, developing a hypothesis, collecting and analysing data and formulating conclusions. For all these stages, there are certain methods (e.g., survey, case study, interview, questionnaire, observation, etc.) used as a guide to action. Research methods should not be confused with research methodology, which is a scientific analysis of research methods in order to find a solution to a scientific question or problem that has arisen. That is, the methodology essentially explains how to apply the correct procedures (or methods) for decision-making. Scientific methods are divided into qualitative and quantitative methods of conducting experiments. Quantitative methods are aimed at quantifying data and generalizing the results of a sample of the target group, if we are dealing with statistical data. Qualitative methods offer an analysis of the collected data in a general context. Mixed method is a combination of traditional quantitative and qualitative approaches. Methodology includes proposed research methods, schemes for finding a solution to the research question. The researcher may use observation, interview, or self-report of the subject to create a complete picture for analysis. Importantly, the research methodology determines the direction in which the research will develop and even the method and type of data collection. It also determines the quality of the data, which raises the question of the method of information collection. The most frequently used methods include: observation/participant observation; polling; interviewing; focus groups; experiments; analysis of secondary (i.e., collected by other researchers) data; or archival research.

The **object** and **subject** of research are the main aspects that determine the choice of scientific research methodology. In our case, international financial groups were selected as the object, and the strategy of their activity was the subject of research.

With regard to the first aspect, it should be noted that the Marxist and post-Marxist paradigms customarily distinguish the so-called «financial-industrial groups». Since they are traditional for Ukrainian science, this is still expressed not only in numerous publications, but also in legislative and regulatory documents. Within the framework of such a paradigm, «financial» or «financial-industrial groups» are considered as the main organizational form of financial capital, the highest level of private-capitalist monopolization. Such groups begin to form with the transition to imperialism due to the concentration and centralization of capital, the development of monopolies and state monopoly capitalism. They signify the merging of credit and financial monopolies (banks, insurance companies) with trade, industrial and transport monopolies.

In the conditions of modern state monopoly capitalism, the universalization of the leading financial groups is intensifying, which contributes to a higher degree of monopolization in the hands of the modern plutocracy. Many of the financial groups have lost their industry specialization. The growing influence of financial groups in modern industries is an important feature of their development during the general crisis of capitalism (especially in the conditions of the scientific and technological revolution). In this regard, the share of the old financial groups is falling, while the role of relatively new ones is increasing, especially those related to electrical engineering, chemical, or military branches. The universal nature of leading financial groups complicates the development of new monopolistic groups, which is why the economies of the USA, Western Europe and Japan are still dominated by several dozen financial groups. The internationalization of financial groups has quickly gained ground. Through this process a significant part of their assets settles abroad while these groups actively cooperate with foreign monopolies within the country.

The integration of the economies of the main capitalist countries gave rise to a new type of international monopoly coalitions of financial capital – multinational industrial corporations, international banking associations, which include large national banks of a number of countries. New forms of the capitalist division of labor created the prerequisites for the emergence of international financial associations, the common interests of which are based on professional ties and cover both the production sphere (intra-industry specialization) and the field of scientific and technical research, production management, product sales and customer service.

This approach reflects confidence in the transition of capitalism to a higher, imperialist stage, which is characterized by the merging of financial and industrial capital and the emergence of several conglomerates, a kind of self-sufficient «state within a state». Such financial groups include various companies based on the principle of horizontal or vertical cooperation, as well as banks (and other financial institutions) that provide their financing on a monopoly basis. At the same time, financial groups compete with each other both at the national and international levels. That is, they gradually outgrow the borders of individual states in their activities and turn into transnational corporations, which become the drivers of globalization.

Powerful financial and industrial groups, «meta-structures» of sorts, have been playing a major role in the development of industrial production in most countries with a market economy that successfully modernized the economy after World War II. Modern financial and industrial groups are universal in nature and transnational in scope. Based on shareholding, financial, and business forms of relationships, they include industrial firms, banks and other financial institutions, trade and construction companies, as well as companies related to other branches of the economy. Therefore, there is a huge variety of interaction forms of interconnected partners. First, there are traditional concerns headed by a large industrial corporation (e.g., General Motors, El du Pont de Nemours, General Electric, Ford Motors, AT&T, IG Farben Industry, Flik, Thyssen-Oppenheimer, Fiat, etc.). Then, there are groups formed around credit and financial institutions (e.g., Chase, Morgan, Mellon, Limen-Goldman, Sacks in the USA or Deutsche Bank AG, Dresdner Bank AG in Germany, etc.). Some include controlled production enterprises, family holding companies (for example, South Korean giants Daewoo, Samsung, LG International, Hyndai, etc.). Finally, there are universal multi-industry associations – business groups that have become the most widespread in Japan (such as Mitsubishi, Mitsui, Sumitomo, Dai-IchiKangyo, Fuje, Sanva). For today's highly integrated corporate associations – financial and industrial groups that concentrate a significant part of the GDP in their hands – economic control has become characteristic not only over individual branches of the economy and sectors of entrepreneurial activity, but over the entire national economy, which gives them the status of economic power centres (Tsvetkov, 2000).

Since different companies can join financial groups, any of them canbe the leader of the group. As a result, financial and industrial groups can be divided into (Sorokina, 2010): (a) banking groups (where the central role of integration belongs to the largest banks); (b) industrial groups, where at the core of the group is a large industrial company; (c) groups coordinated by regional administrations.

Entering a financial group is one of the ways to achieve stable functioning of the bank, therefore banks are actively looking for opportunities to become a member of any financial group. The participation of a bank in a financial group significantly improves payment and teller service for all participating companies. The bank, which is part of the financial and industrial group, is not interested in artificial delays in making payments to client-partners of the group. A permanent closed circle of lending enterprises requires a good knowledge of the specifics of enterprises, their finances, and investment projects. Hence, the benefits in servicing enterprises by banks are fully justified. These include the speed of obtaining loan funds (issuance of credit resources under a preferential system), interest rates lower than those available for third-party clients when using credit resources, possibility of extending the loan repayment period, bank participation in project financing.

Studying the evolution of financial and industrial groups in different countries, it is clear that financial groups with a certain core prevail in each of the countries, which is explained by the different models of corporate development that exist in these countries. Looking at banking groups in more detail, we can classify them depending on the participation of banks.

The first type of financial group is dominated by a bank (or banks), while other non-banking institutions play a subordinate role. This group includes associations in which non-banking financial institutions adjacent to a large bank are extremely small (usually they are tenths of a percent of the bank's assets), which allows them to be considered as full-fledged market participants. The main purpose of such institutions is to meet the specific needs of the bank, although in the near future their entry into the open market is not excluded. In this case, the risks of possible bank losses from inefficient activities of non-banking organizations that are part of the group are minimal.

The second type of a banking group includes a large bank and dynamic non-banking financial institutions. This group includes associations where banking organizations may play a leading role (concentrate more than 80% of assets) but other financial institutions are actively working on the market alongside them. Despite being small compared to the parent bank, the latter remain significant in their market. The fundamental difference from the first group is the market's perception of non-banking institutions as independent players even if they are still too small to stand out against the background of the banking block of this association.

The third group includes balanced financial conglomerates, so-called financial supermarkets. In these groups, the shares of banks in terms of assets and capital are approximately equal to the corresponding share of non-banking operations. Associations included in this group operate according to the principle of a financial supermarket. The list of services they can offer to clients is very wide – from standard bank deposits to trust management and pension insurance. Diversified operations, on the one hand, provide organizations included in this category with greater stability. However, on the other hand, in case of problems in one or more areas of activity, it is possible to «contaminate» the financial group as a whole. The origin of these associations, unlike the previous two types, ceased to be purely banking.

The fourth group consists of financial associations without a large bank. These associations either do not want or are not yet able to have their own bank capable of successfully competing in their sector, and their results are determined by the success of the insurance business and work in the financial markets. So, two positions of the bank as an internal financial institution of a financial groups can be distinguished.

The market-oriented financial system is characterized by a high level of capital market development and a wide range of various financial instruments. On the other hand, the initially high level of development of industrial corporations whose shares' reliability causes doubts greatly facilitates the attraction of additional capital. The functions of banks are reduced only to the accumulation of savings, the provision of short-term loans, the implementation of transactions with securities in foreign markets, without direct participation in the management of enterprises.

A significant degree of dispersion of share capital is yet another difference between the largest corporations of the market-oriented financial system. A typical corporation in a market-oriented financial system has many owners, each of whom has a relatively small share of the corporate capital. As a result, none of the shareholder groups is able to obtain special rights to manage the company. In addition, integration processes in countries with a market-oriented financial system are greatly influenced by antimonopoly legislation. For example, in the American economy antimonopoly legislation not only complicates the concentration of industrial capital, but also creates additional obstacles in the way of merging banking capital with industrial capital.

In countries with a bank-oriented financial system, industry urgently needed additional financial resources at the initial stages of its development but was unable to create them independently without a financial and credit system. On the one hand, this was caused by the insufficiency of profitability in industrial production to develop independently by solely reinvesting profits. On the other hand, these countries have historically been characterized by a relatively low level of financial market development, so it was impossible for industrial corporations to accumulate additional capital by placing regular issues of shares among the population. At the same time, the low level of market development significantly limited the possibilities of investment diversification. Savings were transformed mainly into a form of short-term and long-term loans through a network of commercial banks and other savings institutions. Therefore, a significant share of all financial contracts was concentrated in the hands of the banks themselves, and their credit policy was directly aimed at financing industrial corporations.

All this forced the banks to combine both long-term lending to industrial enterprises and controlling the activities of industrial enterprises since this made it possible to calculate the efficiency of credit investment use. In addition, in contrast to countries with a market-oriented financial system, countries with a bank-oriented financial system are characterized by a more liberal attitude towards the grouping of enterprises, the integration of financial and industrial capital. As a rule, both industrial enterprises and commercial banks did not (with rare exceptions) and do not have strict restrictions on the choice of investments and control over the activities of other corporations. This explains the characteristic close connection between banks and industry, as well as the high concentration of share capital.

A liberal attitude to the integration of enterprises does not exclude sanctions against those who abuse the monopoly position of groups. At the level of the European Community, the concentration of enterprises is controlled *a priori* and requires permission on a case-by-case basis only in the coal and metallurgical industries. In other areas, the European Commission only has the *a posteriori* option of referring a case to the court when it comes to a concentration capable of creating dominant positions. If three-quarters of the company's turnover is realized only in the country, control over its activities, in particular from the point of view of antimonopoly regulation, remains in the hands of the national administration. Paragraph 3 of Article 85 of the Treaty on the European Community allows agreements between enterprises, joint decisions and concentration if: (a) this results in improvements in the production or distribution of goods or acceleration of technical or economic progress; (b) a fair share of the effect goes to consumers, if the actions of enterprises are not subject to restrictions that are not mandatory for obtaining the specified results; (c) competition in a significant part of the product markets covered is not eliminated.

For example, the antimonopoly legislation of Germany allows, in addition to cartel agreements in the field of standardization when dominance in the field is not achieved, agreements of small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as the creation of rationalization and structural crisis cartels, if the participating firms can prove that the agreement involves the rationalization of production or will lead to an increase in exports. The total number of financial and industrial groups that have general economic significance does not even reach ten in the Federal Republic of Germany today. The three leading financial groups are headed by the largest national banks: DeutscheBank AG, DresdnerBank AG and Sommerzbank AG. They account for, respectively, 1/3, 1/4 and 1/8 of the country's share capital.

In turn, many large and medium-sized companies are grouped around a relatively stable core, forming a rather amorphous periphery compared to the core. On average, the main holding groups own shares and control the activities of about 150 companies. The participation of banks in the management of corporations is a purely German attribute of the system. Such active participation of banks on boards is not related to the fact that banks are shareholders. Rather, this participation reflects the peculiarities of the combined position of banks in relation to corporations: banks both own shares and act as trustees of other shareholders. Therefore, together banks represent more than 4/5 of all votes that are represented at the general meeting of shareholders. The voting power of banks is enhanced by the role they play as sources of external financing. Therefore, the relations within the financial group are largely determined by the policy implemented by the bank.

In addition to private companies, state concerns have become quite widespread in the countries of Western Europe. They form the basis of state financial and industrial associations. Many of them were created through a merger of various nationalized companies in the same industry or a number of industries. State holding companies are the entities managing the state property of numerous private joint-stock companies where controlling stakes were purchased by the state. They allow the government to consistently implement its economic policy in various areas of economic and social development.

The current financial groups in Japan were proceeded by large Zaibatsu family holding companies before the Second World War. The process of creating family groups took place in stages. Initially, capital was accumulated during commercial activities. Production was created and developed on this base. And only then were banks and financial companies formed. After the Second World War, during the de-concentration of the Japanese economy, *zaibatsu* were liquidated under the pressure of the American occupation authorities and holding companies are still prohibited. With the revision of the antimonopoly law of 1953, the old financial and industrial associations were revived again.

Summarizing the international experience, the following should be noted. First, the unification of industrial and banking capital into financial and industrial groups is, in fact, the main form of organization of the production system. It forms the technological framework of the effective economies of most economically developed countries of the world and the entire world economy. It is also an expression of the progress of modern social production and at the same time a condition for its further development.

Second, the development of financial groups recently has been characterized by their industrial and banking components getting increasingly branched out. In particular, the production branch includes corporations operating not only in industrial production, but also in the field of agribusiness or in the service sector. The financial branch now includes insurance companies, pension funds, and investment companies in addition to commercial banks. Thus, more and more new branches and spheres of the economy become the object of group control while the connections within the new groups are becoming more and more extensive.

Third, to date, there is no single model of corporate construction and management of financial groups in countries with a market economy. Differences in the composition and structure of each specific group are largely determined by specific historical circumstances. They are individually based on accounting of production and the market, and foremost, the specifics of legislative regulation, the role of financial organizations in matters of corporate ownership and management.

Fourth, the process of creation and development of a financial group is a testament to the growing coherence and interdependence of all organizational links in the structure of financial and industrial capital in accordance with the achieved level of socialization of production, and a breakthrough to international markets. It also demonstrates the successful experience of managing the state industrial sector in a number of European countries (Sorokina, 2010).

At the same time, in modern Western literature («mainstream economics») and legislative acts, it is customary to talk about *financial service groups* that include only (or mainly) financial institutions of various profile. This methodological approach is based on the perception of the modern market economy as demonopolized (often as a result of appropriate state actions) and based on fair competition. Such a system, in particular, provides for a legal ban on banking investment in other sectors of the economy (a tradition that began with the American Glass-Steagall Act and has continued in recent years).

According to general European (EU) norms, a **financial conglomerate** is a group that operates in more than one financial sector. The EU Financial Conglomerates Directive (FICOD) was originally adopted by the EU in 2002 (Directive 2002/87/EC) and last amended in 2013 (Directive 2013/36/EU). The UK introduced FICOD through the Financial Conglomerates and Other Financial Groups Regulations 2004 («FICOR») and provisions in the FCA Handbook and PRA Rules. The main goal of these legislative acts was to overcome the lack of a specific prudential regime for financial conglomerates, which contributes to greater financial stability and consumer protection. FICOD implementation in the UK currently applies to financial conglomerates with at least one entity in the insurance sector and at least one entity in the banking or investment services sector. One of these entities must be located in the European Economic Area (EEA) and the other(s) may be located anywhere in the world (including the EEA). FICOD sets specific solvency requirements, in particular to prevent the same capital from being used more than once as a buffer against risk in different entities of the same conglomerate. It also sets out requirements for conglomerate governance, risk management and information sharing requirements with relevant regulatory authorities (HM Treasury, 2018).

Such financial groups also go beyond state borders in their activities (they are usually called multinational corporations) and act as important actors of globalization. Nevertheless, they do not replace states, but rather contribute to the development of financialization as a qualitative aspect of globalization.

Therefore, the conducted research allows us to propose our own definition of international financial centres. An **international financial centre** is a complex, geographically compact, concentrated system of banks, various domestic and foreign financial institutions, and accompanying communication and other mechanisms of their activity, which ensures high-quality execution of a significant volume and range of financial transactions for national and foreign business entities, as well as governments of sovereign states and international financial organizations.

Conclusions

The methodology of the study of international economic relations should be based on the principles of an interdisciplinary scientific and systematic approach to research and logical methods of economic analysis: economic interpretation, quantitative and qualitative research methods, synthesis of theoretical and practical material. When processing and systematizing information, methods of grouping, classification, and comparison should be used, and the results of the analysis of actual material should be presented in the form of diagrams, tables and graphs. The research should be theoretically based on the works of domestic and foreign scientists in the field of economic theory, world economy, history of economics and finance. The research should also refer to the publications of international organizations and large consulting companies, specialized institutes and associations, proceedings of scientific conferences and seminars, scientific articles in periodicals, as well as materials posted on the Internet. The statistical data should be taken from the National Bank of Ukraine, the State Statistics Committee, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Economic Forum, the Bank for International Settlements and other sources of statistical information.

Summarizing existing methodological approaches and research methods, one mustn't forget the changes and adjustments that should be made and used in connection with peculiar circumstances caused by both the coronavirus pandemic and war in Ukraine. There are several main strategies that can be used in this new reality.

First, replace offline with online. The most common option is a maximum transition to an online format for those data collection methods that were previously conducted personally. There are many free platforms that facilitate online surveys and further data processing, such as Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, etc. Popular messaging platforms for online calls and videos (e.g., Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, Viber, Webex, GoogleMeet) can be used for online interviews. Focus groups, as well as other group discussions and creative sessions are a little more difficult but possible to carry out remotely, for example though LEGO SeriousPlay sessions or design thinking.

Second, focus on the benefits of the online format. This is due to the fact that online space has got not only restrictions but also advantages. For example, interviews or focus groups can be conducted asynchronously online: participants formulate answers to questions in real time, but when it is convenient for them. After conducting such an online focus group, participants can be asked to fill out a short online questionnaire and be sent a link to a gift from partners.

Third, use of online infrastructure, when a special private group is created on a social network for the purpose of research, which you can join only by invitation. Such groups are especially interesting for conducting research in a very narrow or closed group – in WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Slack. The choice of platform depends on which one the participants are more familiar with.

Fourth, application of less popular methods. There is a growing interest in less popular sources and methods aside from surveys, interviews and focus groups, which were mainly conducted previously. Basically, this is a wider use of creative and participatory methods (that is, those with a more active involvement of participants at all stages, joint co-creation and participation). As a rule, participants are asked to express their opinion, present their community or problem through visual means (for example, in the form of a photo-interview). Researchers can ask additional questions or prompts, ask to explain already collected data.

Fifth, «Big Brother» methods are different data collection methods that involve online observation of the objects under study. Of course, this requires prior consent of the participants.

Sixth, using existing data and analytics. It is quite possible that it is not worth collecting new data. It is enough to look at what is already there or has been collected by someone. Analysis of documents, websites of organizations, publications in mass media and specialized journals, results of scientific research and surveys, legislation, official statistics, arrays of open data. A valuable source of information lies in social media, where news is published non-stop, and people exchange thoughts and emotions.

Seventh, organization of team discussions, brainstorming. This strategy involves organizing regular discussions within the team. Such group meetings can also take place online: regularly scheduled – once a week, month or other period; after the end of each significant stage of the project; to analyse difficult cases and situations, failures; to search for and develop strategies, solutions, ways to move forward. Similar brainstorming sessions can be used before, during, and after project implementation. Business literature offers many examples of techniques for quickly and constructively summing up and managing knowledge. These techniques are used in evaluation. For example, the *after-action review* technique is a group discussion during which participants sum up and internalize lessons learned.

Thus, it can be stated that the methodology of studying international economic relations is essentially interdisciplinary. It not only uses a set of rules and tools that are inherent in both the methodology of international relations and the methodology of economic science, but is essentially an autonomous (rather specific) branch of scientific research. Undoubtedly, its importance in the era of globalization will only grow, and its toolkit will become more and more complex and all-encompassing.

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