

# **Navigating the Complexities of Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Strategies and Challenges in Aid for Ukraine's Rehabilitation**

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## **Abstract:**

This paper explores the complex landscape of post-conflict aid for reconstruction in Ukraine following Russia's war against the country and analyzes the recipient and donor perspectives towards reconstruction efforts. The aim of the paper is to contribute to policy-making process on post-conflict reconstruction aid by proposing specific policy approaches. The conflict has caused extensive damage to critical infrastructure and resulted in an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Despite ongoing hostilities, there is an urgent need to plan for reconstruction aid to address immediate humanitarian needs and lay the groundwork for long-term reconstruction efforts. The first section analyzes the ongoing war situation and Ukraine's efforts in planning post-conflict rehabilitation. The second section explores strategic considerations behind U.S. post-conflict aid and addresses importance of effective donor coordination. The third focuses on challenges and criticism towards foreign aid. The paper underscores that successful post-conflict recovery hinges on a collaborative dynamic between international and local efforts. The research outlines five key steps for effective post-conflict reconstruction: Early reconstruction planning; Ensuring effective, corruption free, management of aid flows; Continued democratic reforms; Delivering aid strategically and in cooperation with local entities; Coordinating reconstruction efforts among international donors. The research engages with liberal theoretical frameworks from international relations literature to contribute to the analysis of dynamics of post-conflict reconstruction aid. The paper contributes to the ongoing discourse on post-conflict reconstruction by showing recipient and donor perspectives on post-conflict reconstruction efforts and it aims to inform policymakers and scholars. Qualitative research approach is employed to examine post-conflict reconstruction efforts. It explores Ukrainian and international donor strategies, using case study methodology to provide an in-depth understanding of the Ukraine's post-conflict reconstruction context. The research identifies key themes such as Ukrainian initiatives and donor efforts. It uses primary and secondary sources: Official documents, policy papers, and academic articles, to provide comprehensive insights.

*Keywords: Donor Coordination, Post-Conflict Reconstruction, Russia-Ukraine War, Recipient Perspective, U.S. Foreign Policy.*

## Introduction

The field of post-conflict reconstruction has evolved significantly over the years. Scholars increasingly advocate for all-encompassing approaches to post-conflict reconstruction that address not only physical infrastructure but also socio-economic development and governance structures. This trend emphasizes the interconnectedness of various factors in rebuilding societies after conflict. There is a growing recognition of the importance of involving local communities and stakeholders in the reconstruction process.

Researching post-conflict rehabilitation allows to delve into the complexities of conflict and gives opportunity to summarize and suggest effective strategies for reconstruction. Research provides an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of various intervention strategies in post-conflict settings. Scholars can assess developments in conflict affected country and the impact of international efforts such as aid and development assistance and inform policymakers at both national and international levels.

Russia's war against Ukraine launched in February 2022. The repercussions of this war extend far beyond Ukraine's borders, severely undermining European security and destabilizing the international order. Russia attacks Ukraine's critical civilian infrastructure, including agriculture and energy facilities, and has weaponised food, electricity, water, housing, and medical care. The joint actions from donors are needed to provide humanitarian and civil protection assistance to Ukraine and for the strong post-conflict reconstruction efforts. This might be the largest post-conflict rebuilding effort since the World War Two.

It is difficult to calculate the amount necessary to rebuild Ukraine post-war but due to unprecedented damage. However, in March 2023, the World Bank estimated the cost of rebuilding to be \$411 Billion over 10 years, a figure that rises by \$10 billion every month. Today this cost is estimated to be \$1 trillion (Merrit 2024) depending on the longevity of the war. Certainly, the efforts of the donors would not be enough and recovery efforts from private sector and foreign direct investments and the recipient itself will be necessary. Government of Ukraine is already working on National Recovery Plan that would play major role in planning and aiding Ukraine. U.S. as major donor currently providing political, military, and humanitarian aid to Ukraine is expected to play important role also in post conflict reconstruction. Ukraine will need a great help in rebuilding a well-functioning state.

How to ensure the success of Ukrainian governments post-conflict rehabilitation efforts? What are strategic considerations behind U.S. post-conflict aid? What are the current mechanisms for international donor coordination in Ukraine, and how can they be improved to better align aid efforts? These questions lead to the main research scope for the paper: What effect does Ukrainian government's rehabilitation efforts on the one hand and continued U.S. support, and burden-sharing among donors on the other have on navigating post-conflict aid for reconstruction in Ukraine, following Russia's aggression, considering the uncertainties of the conflict outcome and transparency in aid flow.

Boston Consulting Group and European Investment Bank suggest following principles when approaching Ukraine recovery strategy: Providing aid to Ukraine despite the ongoing war; Ensuring Ukraine's short-term resilience and functioning as an independent state; Investing in focused areas that could catalyze economic recovery; facilitating closer cooperation and integration with EU; ensuring that reconstruction effort ownership lies in the side of Ukraine;

ensuring communication and cooperation among different International organizations in key areas to ensure maximum potential impact (Boston Consulting Group and European Investment Bank 2023).

The research aims to further examine the findings presented by the Boston Consulting Group and the European Investment Bank regarding Ukraine's recovery strategy. Specifically, it seeks to enrich and complement their suggestions by emphasizing the perspective that, while donors play a crucial role in the reconstruction process, post-conflict reconstruction fundamentally relies on a dynamic interplay between international and local efforts. This approach underscores the importance of not only external interests and efforts in aiding but also the active participation and leadership of the recipient to ensure a sustainable and resilient recovery. This research will examine Ukrainian government's post-conflict reconstruction efforts, the strategic considerations behind U.S. post-conflict aid and how international donors can effectively coordinate to ensure long-term stability and development. Key challenges include the uncertainties of the conflict outcome and ensuring transparency in aid flow.

The paper argues that it is crucial that Ukraine and its international partners approach post-conflict reconstruction with the aim that it serves the interests of all sides and that post-conflict reconstruction relies on the following 5 steps: They should start early reconstruction planning; Ukraine must protect its state institutions from corruption and ensure effective management of aid flows for successful reconstruction; continue democratic reforms; aid shall be delivered strategically and in cooperation with local entities, including CSOs; U.S and international donors must coordinate well their reconstruction efforts.

To be more specific, the first section will cover the analysis of the consequences of the Russian aggression and Ukraine's actions in planning post-conflict rehabilitation. The second section will address strategic considerations behind U.S. post-conflict aid and will cover options of donor coordination for the successful rehabilitation efforts. The third section will address aspects of criticism of the foreign aid and challenges associated with it.

This paper will be structured within qualitative research design and the data will be gathered through document based research instruments and thematic analysis will be provided. The paper will also use theoretical analysis based on Mac Girty and Richmond's liberal peace understanding, guided by U.S. and western assistance and domestic readiness and devotion, as well as based on Joao Terrena's liberal peace argument, which also puts post-conflict reconstruction dependable on external and domestic actors reshaping values and putting efforts to achieve peace. Moreover, in theory section post-conflict reconstruction will be also analyzed through Marack Gouldiung's interstate post-conflict reconstruction, which is based on six key aspects: Security, political reconstruction, justice, human rights, economic and social reconstruction and civil societies. In response to criticism of foreign aid, Julian Donaubauer, Dierk Herzer and Peter Nunnenkamp analyze aspects of the aid for post-conflict reconstruction and suggest that aid could be effective especially in improving social infrastructure.

Reconstruction may take years, building and maintaining strong statehood means that Russia will not taunt to go for another illegal war of aggression in Europe. It would also help the West to maintain strong democracy and strong collective defense over Atlantic.

The current research acknowledges the following main challenges and limitations. First, ongoing war situation in Ukraine makes it difficult to make conclusions and suggestions for specific post-conflict reconstructions policy. Second, all the data on aid flow and post-conflict reconstruction efforts are ongoing and change fast in time. This makes it challenging to assess the donor policies in real time and effectiveness of ongoing or future reconstruction

efforts. Hence the situation in Ukraine is constantly evolving, this means that the findings of this research may need to be updated over time.

## Methodology

This paper is based on a qualitative research of Ukraine's post-conflict reconstruction case, gathering data from 2022-2024<sup>2</sup> on consequences of Russian aggression against Ukraine and Ukraine's Post-Conflict Rehabilitation efforts, U.S. Post-conflict aid and strategic considerations behind it, global efforts for the successful rehabilitation. John and David Cresswell define qualitative research designs: narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, case study and grounded theory (Cresswell & Cresswell 2018, 298). Case study research could be incorporated, since the research aims to explore key strategies and challenges in post-conflict aid, analyzing Ukrainian government's efforts, U.S. post-conflict aid considerations, and mechanisms for international donor coordination. "Case study does more than provide in dept description but contributes to our understanding of the world around us" (Lamont 2015, 147).

Aria Priya in her article "Case Study Methodology of Qualitative Research: Key attributes and Navigating the Conundrums in its Application" introduces the definition of a case study by Yin, as an empirical inquiry which investigates a phenomenon in its real life context (Priya 2021, 95).

In current paper empirical research of broader context of Ukraine's post-conflict reconstruction case will help to explain post-conflict aid and behavior of donor and the recipient of aid in current international setting of Russia-Ukraine war. As Lamont states, "if you wish to explain events, development, or the behavior of actors in International Politics, then empirical research methods will provide the means to do so as they will unlock tools that will allow for causal claims and explanations of developments and practices of international politics" (Lamont 2015, 32). Current research tries to explore causality of recipient's domestic efforts, donor's aid related efforts on navigating post-conflict reconstruction, considering challenges.

The research is based on explanatory case study. The research and analysis of gathered data will help to explain what effects of Ukrainian government's rehabilitation efforts, continued U.S. support, and burden-sharing among donors and the uncertainties of the conflict outcome, transparency in aid flow, have on navigating post-conflict aid for reconstruction in Ukraine, following Russia's aggression. Explanatory case study looks for causal factors to explain particular phenomenon and certain conditions that come into being (Priya 2021, 96).

This research will adopt multiple qualitative data collection methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex issues of post-conflict reconstruction in Ukraine. "A case study research allows the researcher the leeway to use any method of data collection which suits their purpose" whether it is questionnaire, interview or the study of the documents. Documentary analysis are highly significant techniques of data analysis in studying particular cases (Priya 2021, 95).

The qualitative approach is particularly suitable for this research because it allows for an in-depth explanation of the perspectives of stakeholders involved in the reconstruction process. "Qualitative methods are used in order to better understand how we make sense of the world around us... often this is done through in depths studies of particular

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<sup>2</sup> Latest data from 2024 is gathered from April.

events, phenomena, regions, countries, organizations or individuals” (Christopher Lamont 2015, 95). In the current research data will be collected through document-based research (ibid.). Document based research will be done with analysis of primary and secondary source documents. Thematic analysis will help identify common themes around the effects of Ukrainian government's rehabilitation efforts, continued US support, burden-sharing among donors, transparency in aid flow, and the uncertainties of the conflict outcome. The first part - Consequences of Russian aggression against Ukraine and Ukraine's Actions to plan successful Post-Conflict Rehabilitation - describes the specific context of Ukraine's situation following Russia's aggression and provides detailed information about the territorial control, humanitarian crisis, military strategies, and post-conflict rehabilitation efforts. It presents rich data, including information on territory control, refugee numbers, and aid received, which can serve as empirical evidence for analysis. It offers an in-depth analysis of various dimensions of the conflict, including military strategies and potential outcomes. By exploring Ukraine's specific experiences and challenges, this section of the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of post-conflict dynamics and the complexities involved in reconstruction efforts. It provides illustrative examples such as the Ukraine Recovery Conference and the National Recovery Plan, which showcase specific initiatives and responses within the broader context of post-conflict reconstruction.

The second section - The Strategic Considerations and Different Dimensions of U.S. Assistance to Ukraine and Donor Coordination - focuses specifically on the United States' post-conflict aid strategies and considerations in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It provides detailed insights into the U.S.'s actions, policies, and strategic calculations regarding aid allocation and diplomatic engagement. It presents empirical evidence, including expert opinions and examples of past aid initiatives (such as the Marshall Plan), to support its analysis. This rich data allows for a comprehensive examination of the U.S.'s post-conflict aid strategies. It offers an in-depth analysis of the multiple dimensions of the conflict and the strategic importance of Ukraine for the United States. By focusing on the United States' specific actions and strategies, this part contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of major global powers in post-conflict reconstruction efforts. It explores the geopolitical interests at play and the challenges faced by the U.S. in navigating these interests while supporting Ukraine. By discussing joint international efforts and the role of various stakeholders, including donor countries, international organizations, and civil society organizations, the chapter highlights the need for collaborative approaches to aid delivery and reconstruction.

The third part - Challenges and criticism of foreign aid - delves into the challenges and criticisms associated with foreign aid, particularly in the context of post-conflict rehabilitation efforts in the Russia-Ukraine war. It provides a detailed examination of various obstacles and criticisms surrounding aid delivery and highlights the importance of addressing these challenges for successful rehabilitation. It offers empirical evidence and expert opinions to support its analysis of the effectiveness of foreign aid in post-conflict settings. This part identifies risks associated with aid management, such as corruption, political instability, and lack of capacity, and discusses strategies for mitigating these risks. By acknowledging these challenges and proposing potential solutions, the chapter offers practical insights into improving aid effectiveness.

Liberal approach of International Relations theory will be used to explain existing knowledge of the post-conflict planning and reconstruction process. “An important element in case study strategy is the relation between theory and the case study research” (Priya 2021, 100).

Qualitative methods include diverse techniques to analyze the rich data. “Case studies allow for analytical generalizations in which a previously developed theory is used as a template to compare the empirical results of the case under study. Such generalizations strengthen the explanatory power of a case study” (Priya 2021, 103). Christopher Lamont quoted George and Bennet saying that case studies are the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop, or test explanations that may be generalizable to other events (Lamont 2015, 148). In the current paper the knowledge has been generated that in order to successfully navigate through post-conflict reconstruction, from recipients perspective it is key to start early reconstruction, to ensure aid transparency and to implement successful domestic-democratic reforms and from a donors perspective it is key to have donor coordination, sequencing of essential tasks and ensuring close cooperation with local government and CSOs. “Goal of a good case study is to both produce knowledge about the case but also provide some cumulative knowledge about the broader universe of cases”.

Primary and secondary sources used for the paper represent a diverse range of perspectives and expertise related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Primary source documents like “official documents, which are published or are publicly released by state, organization or businesses. They can include research report, policy statements speech transcripts” (Christopher Lamont 2015, 97-98). In current research there are used policy papers, like Boston Consulting Group’s and European Investment Bank’s study on “Potential Recovery Strategies for Ukraine”; Expert Insight on a policy issue by Rand Corporation on “Avoiding A Long War. U.S. Policy and the Trajectory of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict”; “A Modern Marshall Plan for Ukraine. Seven Lessons from History to deliver Hope” by German Marshal Fund; Working paper on the “Role of Foreign Aid in Post-Conflict Countries” by Center for Research on Peace and Development. Reports from international experts like report from Atlantic Council by Quirk Patrick and Caitlin Dearling Scott on “Maximizing U.S. Foreign Aid for Strategic Competition”; Wilton Park Reports by Staguhn Janina on “the Role of the Private Sector in Ukraine’s Recovery and Reconstruction”. Also, commentaries and transcripts from meetings will be used like commentary by Ries Charles and Howard Shatz on “Looking Beyond the War: Planning for Ukraine’s Reconstruction” and the transcript from CSIS briefing on the “Assessing the War in Ukraine”.

The secondary sources and internet-based research is also used in the following paper. “Secondary Source documents are those documents which make reference to, and analyze, primary source documents” (Lamont 2015, 106). Christopher Lamont also suggests using internet-based research to access traditional scholarly materials such as scholarly journal articles and books (ibid. 97, 106). Through secondary document analysis and internet-based research, academic articles from journals like Taylor and Francis and digital archives of JSTOR will be used. For instance, “The Effectiveness of Aid Under Post-Conflict Conditions: A sector Specific Analysis” by Julian Donaubauer, Dierk Herzer and Peter Nunnenkamp (2017); Marrack Goulding’s “Post Conflict Reconstruction: Do We Understand What It Is?” (2005); “Myth or Reality: Opposing Views on the Liberal Peace and Post War Reconstruction” by Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond (2007); “The Politics of Postwar Reconstruction as the Discursive International Ordering” by Joao Terrenas (2015). The secondary analyses will also include articles from Carnegie Endowment and Global Conflict Tracker as well as news outlets like the Guardian, Reuters, CNN etc. This will provide valuable background information on the developments of the conflict, the current situation in Ukraine, and the existing policies and frameworks for post-conflict reconstruction from donor and theoretical perspectives.

Christopher Lamont suggests that document-based research, while a commonly used method of qualitative data collection, has a number of limitations of which the researcher should be aware. First, it is rarely the case that the researcher would have access to the full and complete information, and second veracity of what is written in documents should be always questioned (Ibid. 99-100). The following measures will be taken to mitigate the challenges outlined above: Data will be collected from multiple sources to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings. Each source directly addresses the research questions and objectives, documents from reputable and credible sources, representing a variety of perspectives, and geography. Documents that are relatively recent and up to date to reflect the current state have been selected. Outdated or unreliable sources, those lacking sufficient empirical evidence have been excluded.

By employing a detailed qualitative research design and taking steps to mitigate potential challenges, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for sustainable reconstruction, while also navigating the complexities related to ongoing war situation and burden sharing among donors. the research aims to fill a gap in the existing body of knowledge on post-conflict reconstruction by providing an in-depth exploration of the complex issues surrounding post-conflict aid for Ukraine in the specific context of the current Russia-Ukraine war. The research examines the interplay between recipient efforts (Ukraine's rehabilitation efforts), donor coordination (US support and burden-sharing among international donors) on the one hand and navigating post conflict reconstruction on the other, considering transparency challenges, and the uncertainties of conflict outcome among these aspects. This can provide valuable insights generalizable to other post-conflict situations. Explores the behavior of donor and the recipient of aid (Ukraine and US) in the current international setting. This can help improve understanding of international politics and foreign aid practices more broadly.

## **1. Consequences of Russian aggression against Ukraine and Ukraine's Actions to plan successful Post-Conflict Rehabilitation**

The following chapter explores strategic imperatives guiding Ukraine's actions towards successful post-conflict rehabilitation following Russia's aggression. Over the course of two years since Russia's full-scale invasion, Ukraine has tried to regain control over its territories occupied by Russia. Yet challenges persist as Russia maintains its hold over a considerable part of Ukrainian land. In this section of the paper it will be provided insights into potential trajectories for the conflict, underscoring the sophisticated geopolitical dynamics and Ukraine's efforts in post-conflict rehabilitation planning, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies to rebuild and democratic reforms, including fight against corruption.

In order to gain perspective on the possible trajectories of the conflict it is important to illustrate the concrete results of Russia's aggression and the amount of aid Ukraine had access to over the past two years: "Since Russia's full scale invasion, Ukraine has recaptured 54 percent of occupied territory, while Russia still occupies 18 percent of the country". There are over 6.5 million refugees, 3.7 million people are internally displaced, over 14 million people need humanitarian assistance (Center for Preventive Action 2024). Ukraine civilian infrastructure is destroyed, railway network disrupted, seaports blockaded, oil refining capacity destroyed, energy production reduced, production of enterprises lower or stopped, bottlenecks in transport flows in key areas, strangled economy. Ukraine is heavily



dependent on foreign aid. Since January 2022, Ukraine received about 278 billion USD in aid, including 75 billion USD from United States (Center for Preventive Action 2024). Yet provided aid is only sufficient to survive, considering the fact that some donors “warn of donor fatigue” (ibid.).

### ***1.1 Potential Trajectories of the Conflict***

Considering the fact that damage done to Ukraine so far has been huge and Ukraine is heavily dependent on foreign aid, Russia–Ukraine war may take several different courses. Rand corporation analyzed several different dimensions that define alternative war trajectories. Those dimensions include Possible Russian use of nuclear weapons; answers to question of who gains territorial control; and the duration and form of war termination (Charap and Priebe 2023). Regarding the first dimension, Putin has proved all the way since beginning that he is capable to go all lengths to fight this war and achieve its goal „Despite the fact that Russian nuclear use in this war is plausible, we cannot determine precisely how likely such use is, but we can say that the risk of nuclear use is much greater than in peacetime “(ibid.). Regarding second dimension, it is hard to say whether Ukraine will take full control of its all internationally recognized territories. The extent of Kyiv’s control over its territory could affect the long-term economic viability of the country and its needs for U.S. assistance. For example, if Moscow took over Ukraine’s entire Black Sea coast, leaving Ukraine landlocked, that would pose severe long-term economic challenges for the country (ibid.).

Regarding time, most probably a long war would be necessary to allow Kyiv the time it would need to restore control over significantly more land, however restoring pre-2022, and even more pre-2014, territorial status quo “will take months, perhaps years to achieve” (ibid.). At the two-year mark since the war the situation on the ground is effectively the same. Both sides suffered massive losses in 2023. Nothing suggests that the war will end soon (Rumer 2024).

According to RAND Corporation there are three ways the war might end – absolute victory, armistice and political settlement. Neither side at this point seem to have capabilities to achieve absolute victory, it is more likely to have some sort of negotiated outcome (Charap and Priebe 2023). An armistice in case of Ukraine would mean freezing the front lines and ending active combat, however key political issues beyond territorial control would remain unaddressed and a political settlement would require a durable cease-fire and resolution of at least some political issues, like freedom of movement, reconstruction funds, relief of western sanctions etc. (Ibid.). In June 2023 a breach in Nova Kakhovka dam, on the Dnipro River, allegedly being blown up by Russia, caused severe flooding and affected over 80 000 people who live in the zone. The Ukrainian dam operator said it was destroyed beyond repair. Later on, in June Ukraine launched a much-anticipated counteroffensive, nonetheless with small gains on the ground. In November, 2023 Ukraine’s commander in Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi said the war had reached a stalemate (Center for Preventive Action 2024). 2023 proved that neither side was able to tilt the victory on its side.

After 2023 Ukraine adopted “active defense” strategy for 2024 to make room for retraining, and to use less manpower and resources. However without western military aid, the odds that Ukraine successfully resumes large scale offensive operation in 2025 to liberate its Russian-occupied territories are at the outer end of the optimistic range. It is argued that with “Putin’s ambitions unchanged and with Russia possessing superior military capabilities, Ukraine has little choice but to adopt the “active defense” strategy not only for 2024 but for the long run”. Ukraine’s allies and partners also need to prepare for the long war, meaning that annual support should transition into long-term commitment to security and defense (Rumor 2024).

## ***1.2 Ukraine's Post-Conflict Rehabilitation Efforts***

Besides efforts to strengthen own defense both on national level and from international partners, Ukraine also needs successful post-conflict rehabilitation efforts. Post-Conflict rehabilitation success is highly dependent on the abilities of state in conflict to provide security, justice, public services and most importantly the financial resources respective to post-conflict challenges and situation. However, the most countries after the conflict “face high risks of fragility. They face urgent needs for reconstruction, they have weak capacity to mobilize domestic resources” and are exposed to high risks of reoccurrence of conflicts (Ndikumana 2015).

In addition to domestic government efforts and international aid, the private sector plays important part in providing financing. “Private investment that Ukraine mobilizes – from new and existing foreign investors, residents and Ukrainian diaspora – will be essential. Domestic financing was instrumental in the recoveries of Western Europe and Japan after world war II” (Ries and Shatz 2023).

Ukraine should start its early reconstruction efforts immediately with rebuilding critical infrastructure in western Ukraine, enhancing capacity building for Ukrainian workforce and implementing the standards required for EU Accession. Early reconstruction should be followed by medium and long-term reconstruction plans. In the medium term the Ukrainian government can start to expand deoligarchization pilot program and to begin to resolve trade and tariff issues to ensure that private investors do not face unnecessary barriers. In the long term, the government should prepare long-term reconstruction strategy based on energy security, resilience and balance (Staguhn 2022).

This paper suggests that continued democratic reforms are the cornerstone of the successful rehabilitation and aid management. Ukraine's strategy for reconstruction must be transparent to ensure investor confidence. The Key sectors for reconstruction would be rebuilding energy sector, increasing transportation options, and improving operability of storages of agriculture products, also utilizing digital technologies for providing trainings and addressing unemployment issues, registration of IDPs and identification of refugees, digitalisazion of government documents to help accountability mechanisms and rebuilding social Infrastructure like houses, schools, hospitals (Staguhn 2022). To ensure private sector investment and investor friendly environment, Government must take critical steps, including implementing judicial, rule of law, government and institutional reforms including in areas like tax, privatization, capital markets and also reforms should align with EU accession requirements (Ries and Shatz 2023).

Successful recovery would also require a participatory process in identifying the needs and priorities of affected communities, where communities will be involved in decision-making, service delivery and recovery, also it is critical to systematically track public opinions and concerns to establish effective multi sector databases for the tracking of funds. It is also critical to pay attention to local government capacity development, including peacebuilding capacity, state building capacity, and development capacity. Central government on their part should facilitate coordination of recovery efforts at local government level (Rodriguez-Pose and Bartalucci 2022).

For Ukraine it is key to avoid corruption fraud and abuse of power with regards to reconstruction aid. Ukraine should have a strong inspector general system and effective monitoring and evaluation. Inspector general can provide after the fact analysis, while real time monitoring will ensure aid and investments are used properly (Ries and Shatz 2023). The enduring peace plays key role in post-conflict reconstruction. Ukraine could benefit greatly with EU accession and if durable security guarantees are provided by the West. This would help to protect from future Russian aggression and would incentivize investors to make long-term commitments (Ries and Shatz 2023).

Civil society organizations also play critical role in addressing local challenges and are effective partners to international donors. “Ukrainian CSO’s should be an effective partner to the government and the international donor community to deepen reforms, to fight corruption, and to build democratic institutions, which are needed not only for reconstruction and recovery but also to meet conditions of Ukraine’s EU candidacy status” (Heather Conley 2022). Ukraine’s recovery is critical for EU as Ukraine is a candidate and future member country of EU and their markets continue to become increasingly integrated (Boston Consulting Group and European Investment Bank 2023).

Ukrainian Recovery Conference’s provide a great platform for Ukraine to strategically manage post conflict reconstruction. On July 4 2022, delegation from Ukraine, representatives of partner countries and supporters, international institutions met in Lugano at the Ukrainian Recovery Conference (URC). During the Lugano conference Ukraine presented Ukraine’s National Recovery Plan (NRP) which has to guide the reconstruction process. On April 21 2022, president of Ukraine created National Council for Recovery and Reconstruction, which then created the recovery plan that outlines investment needs in years to come, how to build up the needed resilience to win the war, guiding the reconstruction efforts and facilitating the long-term modernization and growth of the economy. According to NRP 2023-2025 recovery requires \$250-\$300 billion and 2026-2030 modernization and facilitating transition to sustainable economy requires \$400-\$450 billion (Boston Consulting Group, European Investment Bank). “As a result of the first URC in 2022 seven key principles for international aid of Ukrainian recovery were established: Partnership based on assessment process, aligned priorities and planning for results; achieving Ukraine’s reform efforts and resilience in line with Ukraine’s European Path; all funding for recovery needs to be fair, accountable and transparent; the recovery process has to be a whole of society effort, rooted in democratic participation by the population; the recovery process has to facilitate collaboration between all actors, including private sector, civil society, academia and local government; the recovery process has to be inclusive ensuring gender equality and respect for Human rights; the recovery process has to rebuild Ukraine in a sustainable manner, aligned with the 2030 sustainable development and the Paris agreement” (ibid.).

On 20-21 June, 2023 Ukraine recovery Conference took place in London and the next one on 11-12 June, 2024 in Berlin. URC 2023 addressed the role of the private sector – and the reforms required to drive investment – as essential elements for Ukraine’s long-term recovery and the Berlin conference reflects the Lugano principles, including a “whole of society” approach to recovery through the meaningful participation of a broad range of stakeholders. Upholding the spirit of the Ukraine Reform Conferences that took place up until 2022, the URC 2024 also showcases Ukrainian reform progress in the context of its economic resilience and the EU accession process (URC International). In conclusion, Russian aggression against Ukraine puts heavy toll across the nation. Despite Ukraine's efforts to reclaim territory and address the humanitarian crisis, the war persists, with both sides locked in a stalemate. Given the absence of absolute victory prospects for either side, negotiated outcome might be a realistic option for conflict resolution. Ukraine's adoption of an "active defence" strategy for 2024 underscores the need for sustained support from allies and partners to ensure its long-term security. The Ukrainian Recovery Conferences in Lugano, London, and Berlin, provide platform for Ukraine to strategically manage the international support. Key principles established at these conferences underscore the importance of inclusive, sustainable, and transparent recovery efforts. Ukraine’s successful post-conflict rehabilitation is based on addressing both the immediate humanitarian crisis and laying the

groundwork for long-term stability, protecting state institutions from corruption and ensuring effective monitoring of aid flows to rebuild successfully, as well as continued reforms for future EU accession.

## **2. The Strategic Considerations and Different Dimensions of U.S. Assistance to Ukraine and Donor Coordination**

The chapter explores suggestions and practices in aid allocation, institutional capacity-building, and diplomatic engagement. It examines the array of aid instruments employed by the U.S. and underscores the evolving nature of U.S. foreign policy. Amidst political debates and bi-partisan divisions, the chapter underscores the urgency of bipartisan cooperation and public support in advancing a cohesive and effective U.S. strategy towards Ukraine. The chapter will also discuss the strategic consideration of the West and joint international efforts towards addressing outcomes of Russia-Ukraine conflict and importance of planning the peacebuilding and recovery process among different international donors.

### ***2.1 Strategic Considerations of the U.S and the West***

The trajectory and the outcome of Russia-Ukraine war depends on Ukraine and Russia's policies but this conflict will have implication further to Europe and United States as well as other global powers, thus it is important for West to do everything possible to achieve the finish line with the results in the best interest of the Ukraine and the West. Lowering the humanitarian consequences and minimizing escalation risks are priorities for U.S. economically, politically, and militarily. It is more likely that U.S. will be taking steps to end the conflict over the medium term (Charap and Priebe 2023). At the CSIS briefing, CSIS senior Vice President Seth Jones suggested his analysis that Ukraine, which had military initiative in 2023 has lost it but it does not mean Russian's have it. 2023 did not change much in terms of territorial control (Jones 2024). Max Bergmann, director of the CSIS Europe, Russia and Eurasia Program made an argument that as long as U.S. aid continues and European production ramps up, Ukraine will be in a very strong position to continue the war into 2025 (Bergmann 2024).

Economic recovery and reconstruction as well as peacebuilding and peacekeeping processes are interconnected. Strong Ukraine economically and politically is in the interests of U.S., Europe and wider world considering strategic security interests. Moreover, Ukraine is a significant exporter of commodities. Ukraine can enhance global food security and provide valuable minerals, including rare earth metals that are indispensable for technology production and enabling green transformation (Boston Consulting Group, European Investment Bank 2022). Immediate assistance to Ukraine is also critical part of addressing core American equities due to following reasons: continuing robust aid to Ukraine is powerful deterrent to future Russian aggression; the gaps in assistance could delay essential military supplies while Russia prepares continuously; immediate assistance to Ukraine also strengthens Europe; assistance to Ukraine is strategic and affordable investment; Any perceived inconsistency in U.S. support for Ukraine risks emboldening china for its far reaching territorial ambitions (Yu, Benson and Hananel).

Fully harnessing the potential US foreign aid requires fundamental reforms to the congressional processes involved in overseeing aid allocation, reforms of bureaucratic agencies tasked with spending foreign aid, improvements to U.S. modes for delivering this assistance and narrowing scope of assistance to areas most critical to advancing US interests.

Some of the needed reforms include: realigning spending to focus on allies and countries strategically important to US competition with China and Russia; investing in strong democratic institutions—such as political parties, independent legislators, independent media, and civil societies; passing congressional legislation (the Non-Kinetic Competition Act) requiring the executive government to submit multiyear plans outlining the US approach; focusing on geography and interests, rather than sectors, to ensure maximum flexibility, strategies rooted in country-specific needs, and longer-term planning; lengthening the time horizon for US foreign-aid programs and objectives from a single year to ten (Quirk and Scott 2023).

## ***2.2 Different Dimensions of U.S. assistance to Ukraine***

U.S. provided the Marshall plan for 20<sup>th</sup> century reconstruction in Europe. Today Europe and Ukraine need another plan for reconstruction and there are six lessons that should be taken into account: as already mentioned reconstruction efforts must be planned now; it must be led by Ukraine and monitored by international donors; there must be transparent line from immediate humanitarian relief all the way to economic recovery; underlying goal of Ukraine's reconstruction must be its economic integration with Europe; assistance must be time limited and carefully coordinated among donors; civil society organizations as well as cities and municipalities must be closely involved (Conley, 2022). Aid reduces the risk of conflict recurrence (Berrebi and Thelen 2011). While providing post-conflict aid, besides the volume of it there are number of things that have to be considered: “How aid is delivered, instruments used, the choice of the sectors and activities to be supported by aid, the sequencing of aid delivery and the contribution of the aid to state building and institutional reforms” (Ndikumana 2015).

It is also important to plan which aid instruments to use: direct bilateral budget support or multi-donor trust fund. Budget support as an aid instrument is usually the dominant instrument but it also raises tension between the donors and the recipients. For the donor it becomes more difficult to link the budget support to specific outcomes and increases the risk of misuse, thus donors must impose conditionalities. However, recipients prefer budget support because it is easier to align it to the national development agenda (Ndikumana 2015). The U.S. has provided direct budget support to Ukraine in the past two years. In fact, it has been a major form of U.S. aid to Ukraine since Russia's invasion in February 2022 (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2023).

It is key to find the right focus in aid allocation and to target the sectors that contribute strengthening the core functions of state like security, law and order, public services, and infrastructure etc. It is also important to sequence the aid delivery and to build intervention on local institutions or/and to circumvent institutional deficiencies. However, it is notable that under Paris Declaration donors committed to use national systems in aid delivering rather than going around it (Ndikumana 2015). Effectiveness in revenue mobilization enables the government to deliver public services, to own national development agenda and to fulfil core functions of the state (Ndikumana 2015). The United States should strengthen Ukraine's state and institutional capacities (core functions) like for instance strengthening local tax administration and other revenue mobilization capacities if it wants to have strong post-conflict reconstruction.

In general U.S. congress refers to five types of aid: Bilateral development assistance; economic aid supporting U.S. security objectives; humanitarian assistance; multilateral assistance and military assistance. Within post conflict states U.S. applies all five types but development assistance and economic security aid are primary” (Berrebi and Thelen 2011). Berrebi and Thelen also define stability and reconstruction aid, under which allocation of foreign aid responds to national-strategic motivations (commercial interests, fighting terrorism, rewarding partners) (Berrebi and Thelen,

2011). In U.S. – Ukraine case, Ukraine’s victory and Russia’s defeat is in strategic interests of United States thus the aid can be characterized as stability and reconstruction aid.

In addition to standard assistance types, the U.S. can consider several additional approaches tailored to current reality. This includes: establishing long-term and internationally coordinated assistance plan, creation of enterprise funds to support private sector and adoption of Ukraine reconstruction law. United States has already developed Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative and has established a component of U.S. European Command dedicated to the Ukraine assistance effort. Assistance to Ukraine is adjusted to the responses of Russian actions, however a long term plan of assistance could also create optimism both during the war to gain certain advantage for the adversary but also in post-war period to make sure lasting peace is achieved.

Next to the official financial aid, the U.S. can set up enterprise funds such as the ones created to help Central and Eastern Europe recovery after cold war (Charap and Priebe 2023). United States theoretically has few options to help shift dynamics of the war. First U.S. must clarify its plans for future support to Ukraine, it must make commitments to Ukraine’s security and define conditions for relief of Russia’s sanctions but dramatic overnight shift in U.S. policy is politically impossible but developing these instruments might eventually help to bring this war to a negotiated end in a time frame that would serve U.S. interests (ibid.)

Another important supportive step for the U.S. would be if the U.S. “congress adopts laws for Ukraine reconstruction like the laws passed after the cold war for Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Even if funding needs are not determined yet, such legislation would enable United States to start organizing its efforts. United States political leaders need to begin a bipartisan effort to explain and build support among the American people for a longer term U.S. policy in Ukraine.” (Charles Ries and Howard Shatz 2023). It has been eight months since United States President Joe Biden requested from Congress and Senate the supplemental aid to resupply Ukraine’s armed forces and help the country prepare for coming Russian offensives. On April 21, U.S. House approved \$60bn in funding for Ukraine, “After months of delay at the hands of a bloc of ultraconservative Republicans, the package drew overwhelming bipartisan support, reflecting broad consensus” (Edmondson 2024). Bipartisan efforts should be strengthened to avoid such diversion on the topic in the future. The Republican concerns about aid transparency and corruption in Ukraine could be a legitimate concern that must be addressed and can be addressed once Ukraine reaches certain leverage over Russia in the war. “A vocal group of right-wing Republicans in the House has raised concern about aid to Ukraine, financial support in particular, highlighting the country’s long-standing reputation for corruption. They also say that money is better spent at home” (Prince, 2024).

Even though there is reluctance from the Republicans in congress regarding providing aid to Ukraine, majority of the U.S. citizens support having strong Ukraine in Europe and defeating Russia in this war. According to a February 2024 poll by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 58% of Americans continue to support sending military and economic aid to Ukraine (Kafura and Smeltz 2024).

### ***2.3 Donor Coordination***

Countries that emerge from conflict require collaboration of aid agencies with specialties in economic development, security and policy advice (Berrebi and Thelen 2011). The war causes economic disruptions not only locally but also globally and it will continue as long as the conflict goes on. According to Romina Bandura, senior fellow at CSIS Project on Prosperity and Development “Keeping the economy running is key to Ukraine’s survival. The International

community can support this effort through budgetary aid and innovative schemes, to help companies continue their operations” (Bandura 2024). According to RAND analyses Ukraine reconstruction should be a partnership between the United States and Europe, U.S. leading on security assistance while Europe on economic assistance, especially now when Ukraine became a candidate country (Ries and Shatz 2023).

Donor coordination, sequencing and prioritization of the essential tasks is key to avoid duplication of the efforts that might burden Ukraine contrary to helping (Ries and Shatz 2023). Global Private sector is currently unwilling to take on the risks associated with investing in Ukraine due to continued conflict and concerns about corruption, rule of law and governance issues that predated war (Staguhn, 2022). However there is room for small reconstruction projects the international community can start now to create investor confidence and can scale up on later stage for instance in digital sector.

Possible coordination efforts of the following donors like the U.S., the EU, Development Financial Institutions, G7 Governments, International Financial Organizations, and private sector include: possible joint secretariat at G7 level, a global fund for reconstruction, a ministry for Reconstruction of Ukraine (Staguhn 2022). Donors must also consider the challenge of access to finance given risks associated with active conflict and corruption concerns. IFI’s and IDFI’s and aid agencies play critical role in providing initial financing to the Ukrainian private sector and creating investor confidence (Ibid.). As a member of G7 the European Union could serve as secretariat and convener of a Ukraine Reconstruction and Recovery Task Force (URRTF). Each G7 member could nominate a representative on task force, as well as other countries and international organizations willing to contribute. The URRTF could form high-level sectorial working groups initially prioritizing revival of agricultural sector, infrastructure development, housing, energy etc. The task force working groups should have clear objectives and must provide timely reports (Conley 2022).

The current approach of international donors is mainly focused on the physical reconstruction and on investments, while not being accompanied by proper oversight mechanisms. Previous post conflict endeavors have shown that this approach has the potential to be extremely harmful. Afghanistan’s example showed that systemic embezzlement and bribery within the host nations contributed to the failure of the reconstruction process. This does not apply directly to Ukraine, assuming that legal authority will be in power after the end of the war, international security guarantees will be provided and anti-corruption efforts will be put in place however “it is impossible to deny the risk of major diversions in the destination of the aid, as evidenced by some episodes of corruption at the governmental level that led to the resignation and firing of the members of the government in January 2023. This is why the current international approach – primarily focused on donations and funding might be hazardous; to complement this, the EU in particular should invest more in the implementation of monitoring and oversight bodies as a priority in the reconstruction effort” (Samore 2023). The utilization of tangible resources like digital platforms, which gather transparent financial data regarding reconstruction efforts, could significantly bolster the efficiency of both international and local monitoring entities (Ibid.).

In conclusion, the complex dynamics of the Russia-Ukraine conflict demand a strategic and grounded response from the United States and the west. As highlighted by experts, the trajectory of this conflict has and will have effect beyond Ukraine and Russia, impacting Europe and global powers. Therefore, it is imperative for the U.S. and the West to act decisively in alignment with the best interests of Ukraine and the broader Western community. Lessons from past

reconstructions, such as the Marshall Plan, underscore the importance of a coordinated, transparent, and locally led approach to aid allocation. Recognizing the strategic significance, the U.S. has employed various aid instruments, including direct budget support and security assistance, to bolster Ukraine's resilience. However, as political divisions persist, bipartisan efforts are necessary to secure sustained support for Ukraine. Public sentiment in favor of aid underscores its importance, despite concerns over transparency and corruption. Advancing aid allocation processes and strategic realignment are essential for maximizing the impact of western foreign aid both in current and post-conflict environment, particularly in the context of geopolitical competition with Russia. Ultimately, the west must remain steadfast in its commitment to supporting Ukraine, recognizing that this serves not only regional interests but also broader global security and economic stability.

### **3. Challenges and Criticism of Foreign Aid**

This section will address certain aspects of criticism of the foreign aid and challenges associated with it in case of Russia-Ukraine war. Some studies question the direct link between aid and development in post-conflict countries. They argue aid can be mismanaged or directed by corrupt governments, hindering its intended impact (Donaubauer, Herzer and Nunnenkamp 2016). However, arguments against aid to post-conflict countries rest on weak conceptual and empirical grounds. From a practical perspective there is substantial evidence of positive effects of aid in some of the most difficult environments (Ndikumana 2015).

For aid to be effective it is not sufficient for conflict to end and security conditions to improve. Corruption can and will likely last in the aftermath of the conflict and will diminish aid effectiveness. In that case working directly with the population may be more efficient and result in better response to urgent needs. However, the decision whether to give aid through government or directly to people depends on short and long-term objectives and on government capabilities. The suggestion is that when the idea is to build a stable political system, the leader should thus be recognized as political forces and aid should be allocated with an appropriate balance of state, provincial and local leaderships (Berrebi and Thelen 2011).

The donors usually face several risks associated to aid management. The first is related to deterioration of political and economic situation during the implementation of donor-funded interventions due to factors that aid has not or cannot address; the second risk is related to lack of capacities in aid project implementation units that causes delays and ineffectiveness; the third risk could be the damage of the donors reputation and integrity (Ndikumana, 2015). It is notable that aid may also face long standing tension between the two criteria of aid allocation: development needs and good governance. In post conflict countries good governance as an aid allocation prerequisite puts recipient country in a disadvantaged position (ibid.) All the risks mentioned are of high probability in case of post-conflict Ukraine.

It is key to consider that one of the aid instruments are trust funds or other pooled funds from multiple donors. These instruments have potential advantages like increased control of the recipient's reconstruction agenda, increased sustainability for external financing (Ndikumana 2015).

Besides risks, there are challenges related to post conflict rehabilitation aid. In general, it is very difficult to determine the timing of the end of the conflict and there is always a high probability that the conflict will reemerge (Ndikumana 2015). Thus, it makes it difficult to plan ahead of the post-conflict rehabilitation. In Russia-Ukraine case, there were



several scenarios and timeframes of ending the war but up until now there is absolutely no certainty of when and how the war will end. Thus while discussing challenges associated with aiding Ukraine, the so called “war fatigue” should be discussed, which has dominated the western media (Mikhelidze and Alcaro 2024). In light of this it is important to highlight that “the Chinese have ramped up aid to Russian military and intelligence services, Russian’s are also getting aid from Iran with the Shaheed 136s and the Mojaher 6 drones, including the building of drone factory near the Russian town of Yerlabuga, and North Korean assistance in providing advanced technology to the Russians, as well primarily artillery shells and munitions for Moscow’s war in Ukraine” (Jones 2024). These aspects of the international aid to Russia should be taken into consideration while assessing Ukraine’s international aid.

Suggested strategic reorientation for Ukraine, as it continues to building its defense, securing support from the west and trying to stop Russia’s advancement, is to develop a roadmap for strengthening country politically and economically. Plans for reconstruction should be advanced as well as Ukraine’s EU membership. Even if Russia would stop military advancements in Ukraine, it may try to turn Ukraine into a failed state, while political obstacles to supporting Ukraine are rising on the both sides of the Atlantic (Kupchan 2024).

While arguments against aid often rest on concerns about corruption and inefficacy, it is suggested that aid, when delivered strategically and in collaboration with local entities, can bring positive outcomes even in the most challenging environments. The complexities of aid delivery underscore the importance of careful planning, coordination, and consideration of short and long-term objectives. Moreover, the persistent nature of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the uncertainty surrounding its resolution further complicates aid planning. Key considerations for effective aid delivery include prioritizing local needs, enhancing donor coordination, and fostering transparency and accountability mechanisms to mitigate risks such as corruption.

#### **4. Theoretical considerations**

This chapter will provide an overview of post-conflict reconstruction concept and how it aligns to liberal theory of international relations. Theoretical perspective provided in the chapter will be a useful frame to understand the post-conflict reconstruction efforts in the aftermath of Russia-Ukraine conflict from the recipient and donor perspectives. Based on Marrack Goulding’s explanations of post-conflict reconstruction, establishing and maintaining security is the foundation upon which other reconstruction efforts will depend. This includes addressing the challenges posed by occupying powers and ensuring a stable environment for rebuilding; However, achieving political stability will require efforts from the recipient, particularly an agreement among Ukrainian political representatives on new political structures and efforts for democratization. This may be facilitated by the prospects of EU membership, which could drive necessary political and judicial reforms; Establishing a functional judicial system and ensuring respect for human rights are essential. This may be challenging due to war-related damages but is critical for long-term stability; Economic reconstruction should begin immediately by recipient alongside peace agreements, focusing on building the necessary structures for economic stability and growth. Social reconstruction involves rebuilding civil society institutions to support democratic governance; Involving civil society institutions in the reconstruction process ensures that the rebuilding efforts are inclusive and address the needs of the population.

Before moving to deeper theoretical explanations of post-conflict reconstruction it would be interesting to understand Marrack Goulding's explanations of post-conflict reconstruction in situations of interstate conflict, such as the one studied in current research. While studying post-conflict reconstruction it is important to make distinction between interstate conflicts and civil wars. The distinction between inter-state and civil wars significantly affects post-conflict reconstruction, particularly concerning sovereignty. In inter-state conflicts, international institutions can intervene according to international law to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts, including reconstruction efforts, without interfering into intense domestic issues in affected state (Goulding 2007). Given that the Russia-Ukraine conflict is an interstate war, international institutions can play a significant role in Ukraine's reconstruction.

According to Goulding, post-conflict reconstruction encompasses six key aspects: security, political reconstruction, justice, human rights, economic and social reconstruction, and civil societies. While these aspects are more pertinent to civil wars, they also hold relevance in post-inter-state war reconstruction. Security is paramount for the success of other reconstruction components, but the question arises about who will provide it, given the challenges posed by occupying power. Political reconstruction necessitates agreement among the state's representatives on new political structures. Establishing a functional judicial system is crucial, though often hindered by war-related damages. Human rights must be respected, and economic and social reconstruction, while important, shouldn't overshadow security, political reconstruction, and justice. Economic reconstruction should commence immediately after peace agreements, alongside efforts to establish necessary structures. Additionally, restoration of civil society institutions is vital (Marrack Goulding 2007). In Ukraine's case security must be provided by its supporters in West, whether it be a NATO membership or certain bilateral/multilateral agreements.

Political reconstruction should not be an issue in case of Ukraine unless President Zelenskyy's administration maintains trust among its people, establishing functional judicial system might be challenging, however with the prospects of EU membership, the necessary reforms might help with building strong democratic institutions. Regarding economic reconstruction there is a wide consensus that necessary steps should start immediately even before the war ends, and the role of civil society is acknowledged alongside. Additionally success in post-conflict reconstruction requires fulfilling certain conditions, among them: a negotiated and accepted peace agreement addressing root causes, an international agency to monitor implementation and resolve disputes, coordination of international cooperation for reconstruction, involvement of civil society institutions etc. (Ibid). The above studied case of Ukraine indicates on all aspects to be fulfilled for successful reconstructions except of clear vision of how the war will end.

Based on liberal principles of peace and international assistance by Joao Terrenas, a negotiated and accepted peace agreement addressing the root causes of the conflict is fundamental for successful reconstruction. An international agency should monitor the implementation of reconstruction efforts and resolve disputes. Coordination among international donors and local actors is essential for effective reconstruction; achieving sustainable peace involves balancing liberal international and local perspectives, creating a societal framework that supports the authority of the state while adapting liberal solutions to local contexts. "The Liberal peace argument provided an intellectual compass upon which the production of post-cold war order could be justified. However, it is through specific notion such as 'post-war reconstruction', and the naturalization of its policies as a legitimate responses to tackle global insecurities."(Terrenas 2015).

It is important to note that there's a shift occurring in how liberalism is being practiced, particularly in the realm of postwar reconstruction efforts, reflecting the changing priorities and approaches of major powers in the global arena. In the modern days we're seeing a reconfiguration or restructuring of liberalism. Major powers feel the need to establish order on a global scale, but they're also facing limitations in implementing the principles of the "liberal decade," which emphasize multilateralism, cooperation, and democracy promotion. This adjustment is particularly evident in the context of postwar reconstruction efforts. In this context, there has been a shift in the way peace, security, and development are discussed, and the models of external-led reconstruction that are being legitimized have also changed (Ibid.).

The politics of postwar reconstruction involves powerful actors promoting liberal interests globally. Through state-building initiatives, they establish norms and values while balancing opposing illiberal claims. With Western powers and the liberal order being challenged by for instance authoritarian states, it is important to note that postwar reconstruction politics also adapt. Initially, reconstruction efforts focused on short-term goals like holding elections but evolved to recognize the importance of establishing functioning states for long-term stability and reform (Ibid.)

The actions undertaken by the United States and European Union in the case of supporting Ukraine during the war and in the post-war reconstruction efforts suggest that they navigate in promoting liberal international order on a global scale while trying to adapt their post-war reconstruction efforts to evolving limitations on interfering in nation's domestic policies. Postwar reconstruction should be a negotiated process rather than one imposed from external forces. Success in achieving peace and development depends on the ability of both external and domestic actors to reshape values, principles, interests, and power relations collaboratively. Achieving sustainable peace and development involves creating a societal framework that accepts the authority of the liberal state while also adapting liberal solutions to address local issues. Peace is seen as a hybrid concept, balancing local and liberal perspectives in Ukraine's case, democratization efforts, collaboration with CSOs and mobilizing to reconstruct early. With Ukraine's society and government striving to EU membership and aiming to implement required reforms for that, the international and local liberal perspectives align, thus making post-conflict reconstruction possible in terms of liberal principles.

"There are many variations of liberal peace as it has been accepted, interpreted and promoted to different degrees in different societies. Since the end of the cold war it has become clear that a new paradigm of reconstruction has emerged" (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2007). Generally liberal peace, whether in reconstruction efforts or not, has been highly debated among academics and policy makers. Supporters advocate for its democratic and framework, promoting human rights, the rule of law, and development. They argue that these efforts are crucial for maintaining order, security, individual liberty, and societal improvement. However, critics view liberal peace as repeating the errors of past imperialism and serving the interests of powerful Western states. They criticize its emphasis on institutions, its focus on territorially sovereign states, and its belief in external actors' ability to solve problems without unintended consequences (Ibid.) Legitimacy of post-conflict reconstruction efforts studied in the given research rests on the understanding of liberal peace, which has been guided by U.S. foreign policy and western assistance. It is argued that liberal peace model is successful in achieving measurable indicators of peace reconstruction, such as for instance infrastructure reconstruction but it struggles with the immaterial aspects of peace, such as reconciliation. The main shortcoming of the liberal peace model is its tendency to produce a low-quality peace characterized by ongoing

citizen insecurity, slow and unequal economic growth, and a perception among many citizens that the benefits of peace are limited and unevenly distributed (Ibid.) The case of U.S. post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Ukraine should go beyond the infrastructure building since the societal readiness and devotion to building democratic state is there.

In an article on the effectiveness of aid in post-conflict countries Julian Donaubauer, Dierk Herzer and Peter Nunnenkamp analyze the research by Collier and Hoeffler and present their suggestion that highlights a brief phase of supra-normal GDP growth in post-conflict episodes, which they attribute to foreign aid granted after conflicts. Their study suggests that without aid, this growth spurt wouldn't occur, disproving the notion of automatic 'bounce-back' post-conflict. Despite ongoing debates over the general effectiveness of aid, the article suggests that aid can be particularly effective in post-conflict scenarios, especially in improving social infrastructure like education and health. They suggest that aid, however, seems ineffective in enhancing economic infrastructure. As argued in the article, Colliers and Hoeffler find that aid helps attract FDI as long as aid granted to post-conflict countries is perceived to be motivated by geostrategic donor interests. While the general effectiveness of aid continues to be debated controversially, it is widely believed that aid can help conflict-affected countries to recover after the termination of conflicts (Donaubauer, Herzer and Nunnenkamp 2017).

Grounded in liberal peace principles, postwar reconstruction efforts aim to establish sustainable peace and development by reshaping domestic frameworks and fostering collaboration between external and domestic actors. Comprehensive approach to state-building could be analyzed through liberalism prism, focusing on strengthening state institutions and fostering economic development. As Ukraine navigates its path towards post-war reconstruction and potential EU membership, it becomes imperative to find a balance among liberal approaches, ensuring a sustainable reconstruction in the aftermath of conflict.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of the research was to navigate into the complex environment of post-conflict reconstruction of Ukraine and the international efforts towards it. Various factors are interconnected in rebuilding societies after conflict, but it is key to have the post-conflict reconstruction process based on two-way efforts of donors and the recipient.

The purpose of the research was to fill the existing body of knowledge on post conflict reconstruction and provide detailed explanation of the complex issues surrounding post-conflict reconstruction in the specific context of Russia-Ukraine war in 2022-2024. The paper examined the two-way interplay between recipient efforts (Ukraine's reconstruction plans and efforts for post-conflict rehabilitation) and the donor involvement (U.S. support and donor coordination) in navigating through post-conflict reconstruction, considering possible challenges such as transparency of the foreign aid and uncertainties of conflict outcome. Studying the case of Russia-Ukraine post-conflict reconstruction complexities provides valuable understanding to other post-conflict situations and help comprehend the behavior of donor and the recipient of assistance for reconstruction. The paper adds value to understanding of international politics, foreign aid practices and post-conflict reconstruction more broadly.

Russian aggression against Ukraine has deeply impacted the nation and the wider Europe, resulting in a prolonged and stalemated conflict. Despite Ukraine's efforts to reclaim territory and manage the humanitarian crisis, there is the

lack of a clear victory for either side. Ukraine must address immediate humanitarian needs, ensure long-term stability, protect institutions from corruption, and continue reforms for potential EU membership. International aid and support remain crucial for Ukraine's recovery and future stability. Ukraine's "active defense" strategy for 2024 highlights the need for ongoing international support to secure its future. Successful post-conflict recovery requires more than military aid; it necessitates effective international support, as emphasized in recovery conferences in Lugano, London, and in Berlin. These conferences focus on securing financing and implementing sustainable, transparent reconstruction plans.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict demands a strategic and committed response from the U.S. and the West, as its impact extends beyond the region to affect Europe and global powers. Drawing from past reconstruction efforts like the Marshall Plan, a coordinated, transparent, and locally driven approach to aid is essential. The U.S. has provided various forms of support, including budget aid and security assistance, to strengthen Ukraine. Bipartisan efforts are needed to ensure sustained support amid political divisions. Public backing for aid, despite concerns about transparency and corruption, highlights its importance. Strengthening democratic institutions and preparing for post-war elections are key for Ukraine's long-term stability. Enhancing aid allocation, coordinated and strategic planning of international donors are vital for maximizing the impact of Western support, especially in the context of geopolitical competition with Russia. Ultimately, steadfast support for Ukraine's sovereignty is crucial for regional and global security.

While concerns about corruption and inefficacy often fuel arguments against aid, strategic and collaborative delivery can yield positive results even in tough environments. Effective aid requires careful planning, coordination, and attention to both immediate and long-term goals. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict adds complexity to aid efforts. The paper reviewed Boston Consulting Group and European Investment Bank suggestions on Ukraine recovery strategy principles and concluded that it is key that both, Ukraine and its international partners approach post-conflict reconstruction with the aim that it serves the interests of all sides and summarized that successful post-conflict reconstruction relies on the following 5 steps: Early reconstruction planning; Ukraine's continued democratic reforms; strengthened state institutions, including protecting from corruption as well as ensuring effective aid management; aid is delivered strategically and in cooperation with local entities, including CSOs; U.S and international donors coordination of reconstruction efforts.

The research was analyzed through liberal prism of International relations theory. The paper used theoretical frameworks from Mac Girty and Richmond's liberal peace theory, emphasizing U.S. and Western assistance and domestic commitment, along with Joao Terrena's argument that post-conflict reconstruction relies on both external and internal efforts to reshape values and achieve peace. Additionally, Marack Goulding's model of interstate post-conflict reconstruction was examined, focusing on six key areas: security, political reconstruction, justice, human rights, economic and social reconstruction, and civil societies. Moreover, in response to criticism of foreign aid, Julian Donaubauer, Dierk Herzer, and Peter Nunnenkamp's theoretical analysis was reviewed to suggest that aid can be particularly effective in enhancing social infrastructure.

This research paper, employed a qualitative approach, utilizing aspects of case study methodology, it has analyzed the strategies and challenges faced by Ukraine in its rehabilitation endeavors, the strategic considerations behind U.S. post-conflict aid, and the mechanisms of global donor coordination. By examining these elements through primary

and secondary sources, including empirical data and expert analyses, this research has provided a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dynamics involved in post-conflict reconstruction.

Through thematic analysis, common themes have been identified, such as the effects of the Ukrainian government's rehabilitation strategies, the continued support from the U.S., and the challenges posed by the uncertainties of the conflict outcome. These themes contribute to a deeper understanding of the broader context of post-conflict aid and the behavior of both donors and recipients.

Russian aggression in Ukraine has not ended yet and the data collection for the paper was challenging since information changes fast in time. However, the information was gathered from multiple, up to date and credible sources, representing diverse perspectives.

The application of the explanatory case study method has been particularly effective in uncovering causal relationships from donors and recipients perspective in the reconstruction process. The research has highlighted the critical role of early reconstruction efforts, transparency in aid flows, and the implementation of democratic reforms from the recipient's perspective. From the donor's viewpoint, it has underscored the importance of coordinated efforts, strategic sequencing of tasks, and close collaboration with local governments and civil society organizations.

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