

INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL AID IN POST-CONFLICT RECOVERY: LESSONS FROM GLOBAL PRACTICES FOR DE-OCCUPIED AREAS

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Abstract. The article presents a study of theoretical, methodological, and applied approaches to the engagement of international technical assistance (ITA) in post-conflict recovery processes, with a particular focus on its potential application in the reconstruction of de-occupied territories in Ukraine. The paper substantiates the necessity of integrating ITA into the national framework for reconstruction, reintegration, and stabilization under the conditions of martial law and systemic transformation. ITA is conceptualized as a strategic resource that encompasses financial, technical, expert, and institutional support from international donors aimed at the implementation of long-term sustainable development programs. The article provides a structural analysis of the forms of international technical assistance, the mechanisms of its provision, and institutional coordination, particularly in the context of cooperation between governments, intergovernmental organizations, financial institutions, and civil society actors. Key criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of ITA are outlined, along with methods of monitoring, auditing, and risk management. Special attention is paid to transparency and accountability issues in the implementation of technical support projects in countries with post-conflict status. Within the empirical component of the research, international experience in post-conflict recovery and reintegration is examined using the cases of Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Georgia, and Croatia. A comparative analysis of ITA models in these states is carried out, highlighting institutional successes, shortcomings, and adaptable practices relevant to the Ukrainian context. The article emphasizes the importance of leveraging such experience not only for infrastructural reconstruction but also for strengthening public administration, security, the rule of law, and public trust in the reintegration of de-occupied areas. The scientific novelty of the research lies in the systematic generalization and critical rethinking of foreign experience in international technical assistance within post-conflict recovery, assessed through the lens of its applicability to modern Ukraine. For the first time, a comparative analysis is conducted of ITA models in countries with varying degrees of de-occupation (full, partial, absent), enabling the development of a typology of approaches to stabilization, reintegration, and institutional recovery of liberated territories. Thus, we can observe in the article the following.

Subject of the study. This research addresses the conceptual and institutional foundations of international technical assistance (ITA) within the context of post-conflict recovery. It focuses on identifying and analysing mechanisms for the application of ITA in the processes of reconstruction, reintegration, and stabilization of de-occupied territories, with particular emphasis on the Ukrainian case.

Methodology. The methodological framework of the study combines comparative analysis, institutional diagnostics, and the examination of selected international case studies. The empirical component relies on the analysis of post-conflict recovery practices in Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Georgia, and Croatia. The study applies qualitative content analysis and institutional comparison, supported by an assessment of aid effectiveness, monitoring instruments, and governance models.

Purpose of the Study. The purpose of this research is to critically examine the role of international technical assistance in post-conflict settings and to assess the relevance of global experience to the Ukrainian context. The study aims to propose an analytical framework for integrating ITA into national recovery policy, with particular attention to its potential for enhancing institutional resilience and promoting sustainable reintegration.

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Conclusions. The study demonstrates that international technical assistance can function as a key component in the recovery and stabilization of territories affected by conflict, provided it is coherently embedded in national strategic planning. The findings suggest that the effectiveness of ITA depends on the alignment between donor approaches and local needs, institutional capacity, and mechanisms of coordination. Based on the comparative analysis, the research develops a typology of ITA application in countries with differing post-conflict trajectories, offering applicable insights for the reconstruction of Ukraine's de-occupied areas.

Keywords: international technical assistance, de-occupation, post-conflict recovery, reintegration, institutional capacity, donor support, project management, stabilization policy.

JEL Classification: F35, H84, O19, R58, O21, K33, H56, P48

1. Introduction

In the current context of post-conflict development in states affected by external aggression and the temporary occupation of certain territories, the issue of effective resource mobilization for infrastructure reconstruction, population reintegration, and institutional capacity-building has become particularly pressing. Within this framework, international technical assistance (ITA) serves not only as a mechanism for addressing basic needs but also as a strategic tool for influencing transformation processes that facilitate sustainable recovery. The study of best international practices in attracting ITA enables the adaptation of proven approaches to national conditions, ensuring both the effectiveness and transparency of aid governance mechanisms. The relevance of this research is determined by the need to design efficient models of cooperation with international donors under the constraints of a challenging geopolitical environment and limited internal resources. Given that the de-occupied territories of Ukraine require not only physical reconstruction but also a comprehensive socio-economic reset, it is essential to develop integrated recovery strategies based on the experiences of countries that have faced similar challenges. International practice demonstrates a wide spectrum of ITA engagement models – from centralized government-led platforms to localized civil society initiatives. A systematic analysis of these models allows for the identification of key success factors, the avoidance of typical pitfalls, and the formulation of well-grounded recommendations for the implementation of effective ITA policies in Ukraine within the broader context of rebuilding de-occupied territories.

For the purposes of this study, the analysis of global recovery practices encompasses both cases involving the actual restoration of state sovereignty over previously occupied regions (e.g., Croatia, Iraq) and examples of post-conflict recovery in territories that experienced loss of control, military destruction, or external administration (e.g., Kosovo, Afghanistan, Georgia).

2. Review of the Literature

Over the past two decades, international technical assistance (ITA) in the context of post-conflict recovery has become the subject of multidimensional research by leading think tanks, international organizations, and academic institutions. This scholarly and practical discourse forms a conceptual foundation for understanding the tools of external influence on transformational processes in states emerging from conflict or undergoing reintegration of liberated territories.

A significant theoretical and methodological contribution to the analysis of the scope and limitations of international assistance has been made by Chr. Zürcher (2020), who conducted a meta-analysis of technical support programs in Afghanistan over the period of 2008–2018. A similar emphasis on the internally determined constraints of external intervention is evident in the work of I. Costantini and D. O'Driscoll (2022), who explore the two-decade evolution of external security assistance in Iraq, revealing the transformation of strategic approaches and their implications for the legitimacy of state institutions.

In the context of the Balkans, the studies by J.-P. Klein (2003) and Pavković N. (2023) highlight the unique role of transitional administrations (such as UNTAES in Croatia) and localized demining institutions, which served as a model for many subsequent missions. The work of Szerencsés L. (2020) illustrates how security narratives and international assistance influenced Croatia's political self-identification during the post-conflict period. In research focused on Georgia, Lefebvre S. and McDermott R. (2009) underscore the role of intelligence, informational dominance, and external aid in the dynamics of the 2008 conflict.

International technical assistance (ITA) represents a systemic and institutionalized form of intergovernmental, interagency, or non-governmental support, provided on a non-reimbursable or concessional basis with the aim of facilitating socio-economic development, institutional modernization, and the strengthening of resilience in states undergoing

recovery, transformation, or adaptation to external challenges. In a broader conceptual framework, ITA should be regarded not merely as a financial or material injection, but as a comprehensive assemblage of intellectual, expert, technological, and organizational resources integrated within structured development mechanisms aligned with the strategic priorities of the recipient country, Kisterskyi L. and Lypova T. (2010).

According to O. Lysenko (2009), ITA is to be understood as the resources and/or services transferred on a gratuitous and non-repayable basis by a donor country to support the social and economic development of a recipient country under the conditions stipulated in international treaties. In her doctoral dissertation dedicated to the legal regulation of international technical assistance, I. V. Bratko (2011) defines ITA as an official, non-repayable, and non-commercial form of development aid provided by international organizations and donor countries within the framework of technical and economic cooperation to ensure the sustainable development of recipient states and to contribute to positive transformation within the international community.

The reviewed literature demonstrates substantial progress in the study of international technical assistance (ITA), particularly in post-conflict contexts such as Afghanistan, Iraq, the Balkans, and Georgia. Researchers have explored the strategic frameworks, institutional limitations, and external-internal dynamics that shape the outcomes of donor interventions. However, the focus of most studies remains limited to retrospective analyses or country-specific cases.

At the same time, there is a lack of comprehensive research that examines ITA as an integrated component of post-occupation recovery, especially in situations involving the reintegration of territories previously under foreign control. This includes the need to better understand how national institutions can coordinate diverse aid flows, maintain transparency, and ensure that assistance aligns with long-term development priorities under complex political and institutional conditions. Given the increasing relevance of these issues in the Ukrainian context, further research is necessary to identify models of effective ITA governance in de-occupied regions, paying special attention to legal mechanisms, institutional design, and donor-recipient coordination practices. Such work would not only enrich the theoretical discourse but also support the formulation of practical solutions for sustainable recovery.

3. Presentation of the Research and Approaches

Depending on the typology of funding sources and implementation mechanisms, ITA can take multiple

forms, including: direct budgetary support; project implementation through international organizations or bilateral agencies; technical expertise; training programs; equipment supply; institutional capacity-building; consultancy services, and others. The instruments of ITA comprise co-financing programs, targeted grants, pilot projects, memoranda of understanding, as well as digital platforms designed to ensure transparent aid monitoring.

Key international donors include USAID, GIZ, UNDP, and SIDA, along with thematic EU initiatives (such as NDICI – Global Europe), which operate under the broader framework of the EU's neighbourhood and enlargement policy, according to Kulish P. (2016).

Table 1 shows the distribution of sources financing international technical assistance in post-conflict recovery programs.

Table 1

Sources of Technical Assistance Funding

Funding source	Share (%)
International organizations	50
Bilateral Agreements	30
Non-governmental organizations	15
Others	5

Source: prepared on the data of OECD Development Cooperation Reports; Global Humanitarian Assistance Reports

Engagement with donors in the domain of international technical assistance is carried out through a multilayered system of communication, coordination, and strategic alignment between the recipient country and its donor counterparts – whether states or organizations. The effectiveness of such cooperation relies on principles of alignment, predictability, transparency, and mutual accountability. These principles are reflected in internationally endorsed frameworks, including the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011).

In practical terms, cooperation is facilitated through the establishment of joint coordination platforms – such as government-donor groups and interagency working bodies – the development of overarching strategic documents (such as Country Strategy Papers or Multi-Annual Indicative Programmes), the conclusion of intergovernmental agreements and memoranda of understanding, and the delegation of authority to national agencies responsible for administering assistance. A crucial element in ensuring the efficiency of such partnerships lies in strengthening the institutional capacity of recipient-side structures – particularly their ability to prepare feasibility studies, to manage grant funding in accordance with international best practices (including OECD-DAC standards; see Figure 1), and to

implement integrated systems for monitoring, evaluation, and accountability.

Official development assistance (ODA) is government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries. ODA has been the main source of financing for development aid since it was adopted by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) as the "gold standard" of foreign aid in 1969. The OECD is the only official source of reliable, comparable, and complete statistics on ODA.

In the Ukrainian context, there is an increasingly urgent need to establish a transparent digital ecosystem for recording, analyzing, and publicly visualizing the use of international technical assistance. Such a system would both enhance donor trust and strengthen accountability mechanisms, according to Antoniuk K., Antoniuk D., Bukharina L., Shyshkin V. (2019). Despite its potential as a tool for recovery, the implementation of international technical assistance is frequently challenged by limited transparency and significant corruption risks. These challenges often compromise the achievement of intended outcomes. Among the most critical vulnerabilities are: the absence of integrated information systems for tracking assistance flows, a low level of procedural openness in resource

allocation, insufficient independent oversight, and the tokenistic or partial involvement of local communities in planning and implementation processes. Corruption risks tend to intensify in crisis-affected and post-conflict areas, where weak governance institutions, irregular procurement practices, fragmented communication channels with donors, and blurred lines of institutional responsibility prevail. Addressing these issues requires the introduction of digital tools for e-auditing, the development of anti-corruption compliance infrastructures, the implementation of transparent ex ante and ex post impact assessment procedures, and the mandatory disclosure of data in accordance with open aid standards promoted by the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).

Only through systemic auditing, transparent governance, and active engagement of civil society can international technical assistance be endowed with functional legitimacy and serve as a truly effective instrument for reconstruction, according to Lutsenko A. (2019). International experience with post-conflict recovery in the Balkans – particularly in Kosovo (see Table 2) – offers valuable lessons for Ukraine in mobilizing international technical assistance for the reconstruction of de-occupied regions.

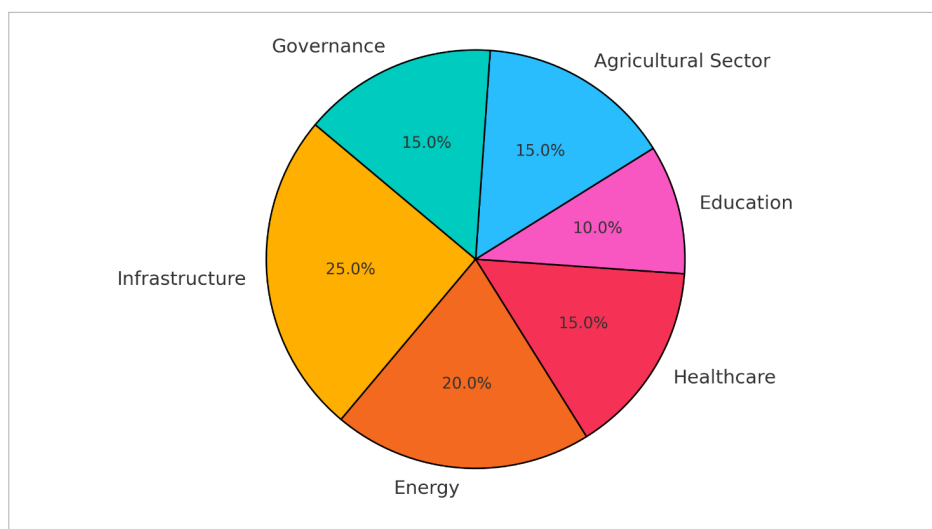


Figure 1. Distribution of international official development assistance (ODA) projects across key sectors, 2022

Source: prepared on the data of ODA by sectors (OECD, 2023)

Table 2

World Bank Grants for Post-Conflict Countries (1997–2002)

Country/Region	Purpose of Grant	Amount (USD Millions)
Kosovo	Humanitarian relief and infrastructure rebuilding	150
East Timor	Humanitarian support and economic development	50
Sierra Leone	Emergency rehabilitation and governance	100
Afghanistan	Initial reconstruction efforts	100

Sources: prepared on the data of World Bank (2003–2004)

4. International Technical Assistance in Kosovo and Afghanistan: Institutional Models and Strategic Lessons

Following the end of the armed conflict in Kosovo in 1999 – marked by large-scale population displacement, the destruction of infrastructure, and deep institutional disintegration – the international community acknowledged the urgent need for systemic, long-term, and targeted support for recovery processes. In response to these challenges, the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) was established as a specialized executive body of the European Commission. It operated from 2000 to 2008, coordinating the implementation of international technical assistance (ITA) projects not only in Kosovo but also in North Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro. The EAR operated under a mandate directly delegated by the European Commission, which ensured flexibility in decision-making, swift execution of programmes, and high efficiency in budget administration. The total volume of funding administered by the agency in Kosovo exceeded €1.1 billion and focused on five key sectors: energy, housing and municipal infrastructure, transportation, agriculture, and public administration (European Agency for Reconstruction). Among the agency's most significant undertakings were strategic projects in the field of energy security. These included the capital overhaul of the Kosovo B thermal power plant, the rehabilitation of the electricity grid, and investments in the stabilization of coal extraction. As a result, systemic blackouts, which had plagued earlier post-conflict years, were avoided, and a reliable power supply was restored. During the EAR's operation, more than 8,400 housing units were reconstructed, with special attention given to marginalized groups, particularly internally displaced persons, ethnic minorities, and female-headed households. The implementation of these projects followed principles of conflict-sensitive aid, helping to reduce the risk of renewed interethnic tensions. The restoration of critical logistical corridors – most notably the Pristina – Skopje route – formed a foundation for Kosovo's integration into the regional economic system. Over 400 kilometers of roads were rehabilitated, including the reconstruction of bridges, tunnels, and railway junctions.

The ITA mechanism also encompassed an emergency assistance programme for farmers, which provided essential inputs – such as seeds, fertilizers, and tools – to more than 30,000 households. In addition, agricultural advisory services were established to support productivity growth and promote rural employment. Administrative capacity-building programmes included professional training for public servants, institutional reforms in local self-government,

digitalization of public registries, and the introduction of good governance practices. A substantial number of projects also targeted the rule of law, anti-corruption oversight, and judicial reform, according to Ugolini P., Enoch (2006).

Financial support in Kosovo was delivered through the CARDS programme (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation), which was established by the European Union to promote stability across the Western Balkans. Between 2000 and 2006, CARDS mobilized more than €5 billion, over 80% of which was allocated to institutional reconstruction and support for democratic governance. The programme was based on principles of multi-level coordination, involving partnerships with local authorities, civil society organizations, and international institutions such as UNMIK, the OSCE, and UNDP.

The Kosovo case illustrates the effectiveness of specialized institutions with delegated authority, capable of rapidly managing international technical assistance projects in a complex post-conflict environment. For Ukraine, the adaptation of a similar institutional model appears highly relevant. Establishing an analogue of the EAR – an entity capable of ensuring institutional continuity, transparency in resource allocation, and the rapid mobilization of technical assistance – would represent a strategic step toward sustainable recovery. Equally important is the application of the Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp), which channels resources not into fragmented, isolated projects but into comprehensive reforms within defined priority sectors such as housing, energy, or administrative governance. When analyzing international experience in post-conflict recovery, the case of Afghanistan presents a particularly challenging yet instructive example. It offers insights into the structural obstacles to the effective delivery of international technical assistance under conditions of chronic instability, limited institutional capacity, and significant external dependency. Given the scale and duration of international engagement, Afghanistan effectively functioned as a testing ground for multiple models of donor coordination, sectoral financing, and institutional engineering.

Following the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001, the reconstruction of Afghanistan became a top priority for the international community. The process was largely coordinated through the International Conference on the Reconstruction of Afghanistan (Bonn Process, 2001). Within this framework, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) was established – a multilateral trust fund administered by the World Bank, which accumulated over \$13 billion between 2002 and 2021 to finance public services, infrastructure development, and institutional reform. The ARTF operated under a model of direct budgetary support (on-budget aid), distinguishing

the Afghan case from many other post-conflict settings that relied primarily on project-based (off-budget) assistance. This approach allowed Afghan authorities to retain nominal sovereignty over resource allocation, while at the same time institutionalizing accountability mechanisms, monitoring frameworks, and audit procedures in line with the standards of international financial institutions according to The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund.

Infrastructure development projects – including road rehabilitation, electricity network restoration, and water supply system improvements – were implemented both through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and directly via mechanisms such as USAID Infrastructure Projects and the Asian Development Bank's Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund.

One of the flagship projects was the reconstruction of the Ring Road, which connects Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, and Mazar-i-Sharif. Its objective was to establish a core state-level logistics network, yet the initiative faced serious challenges related to security conditions, corruption, and technical maintenance capacity. Particular emphasis was placed on the agricultural sector through programmes such as the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), as well as initiatives launched by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). The NSP facilitated the formation of more than 30,000 Community Development Councils (CDCs), which oversaw the implementation of over 60,000 micro-projects. However, the sector was also marked by a high degree of informality, including the cultivation of opium poppy, which significantly complicated the effective administration of technical assistance, according to the figures of International Monetary Fund (2020). ITA also contributed to notable improvements in access to primary education – particularly for girls – and to the expansion of the national healthcare infrastructure. The Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS), funded by ARTF and implemented in partnership with non-governmental organizations, became an effective tool for vertically delivering services to remote and hard-to-reach areas. Nevertheless, developments following 2021 have posed serious threats to the sustainability of these gains.

Despite the substantial financial inflows, the Afghan case also exposes the structural inefficiencies inherent in externally driven recovery models. Corruption risks, donor fragmentation, programme duplication, and the absence of a durable political architecture collectively led to a high level of institutional aid dependency – defined as the state's inability to sustain core functions without continuous external funding.

According to the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), only

approximately 30% of the total volume of ITA was spent effectively or in alignment with its original objectives. In some infrastructure projects, the proportion of "lost investments" exceeded 50%.

The experience of Afghanistan reflects the dual nature of ITA: on the one hand, it holds the potential for large-scale restoration of vital systems; on the other, it carries the risk of generating institutional voids and temporary simulations of capacity that collapse once external support is withdrawn. Accordingly, the Afghan case underscores the need to integrate strategies for local institutional development into ITA programming in post-conflict contexts, as a prerequisite for long-term stability and sovereign reconstruction.

5. International Coordination, Sectoral Reforms, and Post-Conflict Recovery: The Cases of Iraq and Georgia

Following the intervention of coalition forces in 2003, Iraq emerged as another example of an extremely complex and multidimensional post-conflict recovery process, in which the systematic deployment of international technical assistance became a central pillar. In a context marked by institutional collapse, widespread infrastructure destruction, and escalating sectarian violence, the international community adopted a hybrid model that combined emergency response, stabilization, reconstruction, and systemic governance reform. In Iraq, a number of international structures played a key coordinating role in delivering technical assistance. Chief among them was the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI), established under the joint auspices of the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), alongside major bilateral actors such as USAID, the European Commission, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), and Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Between 2004 and 2010, IRFFI mobilized more than USD 2.3 billion, which was allocated between the UN Development Group Iraq Trust Fund and the World Bank. Priority areas of investment included energy infrastructure, healthcare, education, water supply, and institutional development.

In the energy sector, assistance efforts focused on the restructuring of generation capacity, the rehabilitation of transmission networks, and the stabilization of the national energy balance. These objectives were supported through both public subsidies and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) schemes. Between 2004 and 2007, for example, USAID invested over USD 4 billion in electricity grid and water pipeline restoration projects. The healthcare sector saw the reconstruction of over 150 hospitals and

clinics, accompanied by the training of thousands of doctors and medical personnel. Education programmes concentrated on the modernization of school infrastructure, the development of updated curricula, and teacher training, especially in northern Iraq – an area heavily impacted by terrorism and insurgent activity, according to Jaber H. (2022). Particularly noteworthy were initiatives in public administration reform. These included fiscal decentralization, the establishment of decentralized governance institutions, the introduction of electronic procurement platforms (e-procurement), and the strengthening of anti-corruption institutions such as Iraq's Commission of Integrity, according to World Bank Group (2017).

Nevertheless, international reviews pointed to limited effectiveness in several projects, excessive fragmentation of aid efforts, functional duplication, and a general lack of coordination among donors. The Iraqi case revealed systemic challenges related to corruption risks, limited community involvement in decision-making, weak local institutional capacity, and the absence of long-term monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Following the August 2008 armed conflict between Georgia and the Russian Federation – which led to the temporary loss of control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia – the Georgian government faced the daunting tasks of socio-economic recovery, domestic political stabilization, and the reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs). In this context, international technical assistance emerged as a vital instrument of strategic partnership between Georgia and its leading international donors. In October 2008, a donor conference held in Brussels and co-organized by the European Commission and the World Bank succeeded in mobilizing more than USD 4.5 billion in aid for the 2008–2010 period – significantly exceeding initial estimates of need. The funding was distributed across multiple sectors: humanitarian relief, housing for IDPs, institutional recovery, macro-financial stabilization, infrastructure rehabilitation, and private sector support (Lutsenko, 2019). To manage external aid effectively, Georgia developed a dedicated institutional architecture. The Ministry of Finance coordinated programme-based budgeting with integrated international project portfolios, while the Department for Coordination of International Assistance oversaw strategic alignment, monitoring, and reporting processes. A Single Treasury Account was introduced to centralize donor funds and minimize corruption risks. One of the key institutions in this system was the Ministry for Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MRA), which led humanitarian and housing initiatives, including the construction of homes for more than 36,000 IDPs. Major contributors included the European Union, the United States,

Japan, Germany, the Nordic countries, and international financial institutions such as the EBRD, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Supported by USAID, UNHCR, and the European Investment Bank (EIB), over 40 infrastructure projects in the housing sector were implemented. By 2012, more than 12,000 housing units had been constructed or renovated, addressing the basic needs of displaced populations while also facilitating their social integration. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the German development agency GIZ launched a range of support programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), including co-financed grants, business incubators, and technical advisory services. For instance, the "Private Sector Development in Georgia" programme reached over 5,000 enterprises.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) invested in large-scale infrastructure projects, including the rehabilitation of roads, bridges, and energy infrastructure such as hydroelectric power stations and transmission lines. A major initiative in this regard was the East-West Highway Improvement Project, which contributed to Georgia's integration into the Transcaucasian transport corridor.

European Union programmes – most notably EU4Georgia – along with SIGMA (a joint initiative with the OECD), provided Georgia with technical assistance for building a professional civil service, strengthening anti-corruption legislation, and advancing digital governance. Reforms supported by these programmes included the introduction of electronic land cadastres, e-procurement systems, and biometric ID cards.

Despite the breadth and intensity of donor engagement, the Georgian case also revealed a set of structural challenges that hold clear relevance for the Ukrainian context:

- Mismatch between donor expectations and local needs. A portion of funding was directed toward politically symbolic or visibility-driven projects with limited practical effectiveness on the ground.
- Sustainability issues. Many newly built infrastructure assets deteriorated within five to seven years due to the absence of long-term maintenance mechanisms.
- Limited involvement of local civil society. The insufficient engagement of grassroots organizations in the planning and monitoring of technical assistance programmes diminished both transparency and accountability.

Nevertheless, Georgia provides a relatively successful model of aid coordination based on integration with the national budgeting process, digitalized reporting, and medium-term strategic planning. These institutional mechanisms – particularly the coordinated alignment between government

and donors – can serve as a valuable template for Ukraine in managing the recovery of its de-occupied territories.

6. Flexible Models and Deep Institutional Integration: The Case of Post-Conflict Recovery in Croatia

Illustrative examples of post-conflict recovery, such as that of Georgia, highlight the critical importance of adapting international technical assistance (ITA) instruments to national contexts, particularly in settings marked by ongoing security threats and unresolved territorial status. At the same time, certain European cases – most notably Croatia – demonstrate a more deeply institutionalized model, in which ITA is fully integrated into national policy frameworks for reintegration and reconstruction. Croatia's recovery following the violent conflict of the 1990s stands as a notable example of effective synergy between international actors, government institutions, and local communities. This collaborative effort laid the groundwork not only for physical reconstruction but also for sustainable democratic development.

Following the War of Independence (1991–1995), Croatia faced profound political, social, and infrastructural disintegration. Addressing the challenge of reintegrating temporarily occupied and war-affected territories required a multi-tiered recovery strategy. With aspirations for European integration and a strong commitment to long-term stability, the Croatian government developed a complex reintegration model in which international technical assistance played a central role. This effort was coordinated in cooperation with the United Nations, the European Union, the OSCE, and various bilateral donors, according to Post-conflict Reconstruction and Stabilization Programming (2015). The formal basis for launching the reconstruction process was the Erdut Agreement (1995), which provided for the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Sirmium. Following the agreement, the United Nations established a transitional administration – UNTAES – which governed the region from 1996 to 1998. During its mandate, UNTAES oversaw demilitarization, infrastructure rehabilitation, the reestablishment of local governance, and the protection of minority rights. UNTAES represented a unique form of international mandate, combining direct administrative authority with targeted technical and financial assistance, according to Klein J. (2003).

At the level of national policy, Croatia implemented the National Programme for the Return and Reintegration of Displaced Persons, beginning in 1997. This programme covered over 250,000 internally displaced persons and refugees. A state-level Croatian

Reconstruction Fund was established to coordinate the use of international resources for the rebuilding of housing, communications, schools, and medical facilities. The main focus of ITA was the reconstruction of the housing stock destroyed or damaged during the war. With support from the EU, Sweden, Switzerland, and USAID, more than 145,000 housing units were rehabilitated. The Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees Housing (OPRH) provided free housing to over 20,000 IDPs and ethnic Serbs returning to their pre-war communities. UNDP, the EBRD, and the World Bank invested in projects aimed at restoring electricity supplies, water infrastructure, road networks, and schools in former conflict zones. Particular attention was given to Eastern Croatian regions such as Vukovar, Osijek, and Knin. One example, the Community Revitalization through Infrastructure project, actively involved local communities in planning and implementation processes, according to Kornfein I. (2010). Croatia also became one of the regional leaders in humanitarian demining. As early as 1998, the country established the Croatian Mine Action Centre (CROMAC). With financial support from the European Union, Japan, Canada, and Norway, a large-scale programme was implemented to clear more than 1,200 square kilometers of contaminated territory. This initiative enabled the restoration of agricultural land and catalyzed the social and economic reintegration of war-affected areas, according to Lefebvre S., McDermott R. (2009).

Prominent examples of post-conflict recovery – such as the case of Georgia – underscore the importance of tailoring international technical assistance (ITA) to the specificities of national contexts, especially in situations involving ongoing threats and unresolved territorial disputes. At the same time, certain European cases – most notably Croatia – offer a distinct illustration of how ITA can be deeply institutionalized within national policy frameworks for reintegration and reconstruction. Croatia's recovery following the large-scale armed conflict of the 1990s is widely regarded as a successful case of coordinated action between international partners, state institutions, and local communities. This collaborative dynamic laid the foundations not only for physical reconstruction but also for long-term democratic development.

After the conclusion of the War of Independence (1991–1995), Croatia found itself in a state of deep political, social, and infrastructural disintegration. The recovery of temporarily occupied and conflict-affected territories required a comprehensive, multi-level strategy. Driven by the aspiration to join the European Union and ensure long-term peace and stability, the Croatian government developed a multi-component reintegration model. This model relied heavily on the tools of international technical assistance, implemented in coordination with

the United Nations, the European Union, the OSCE, and a range of bilateral donors, according to Post-conflict Reconstruction and Stabilization Programming (2015).

The formal legal basis for launching the recovery process was the Erdut Agreement (1995), which outlined the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Sirmium. Following the agreement, the United Nations established the UN Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES), which operated from 1996 to 1998. UNTAES held administrative authority over the territories and was responsible for demilitarization, infrastructure rehabilitation, re-establishing local governance, and protecting minority rights. This mission represented a unique international mandate, combining executive governance functions with substantial technical and financial support from the international community, according to Klein J. (2003). At the national policy level, the Croatian government implemented the National Programme for the Return and Reintegration of Displaced Persons beginning in 1997. This programme encompassed over 250,000 internally displaced persons and refugees.

The government also created the Croatian Reconstruction Fund, which coordinated the allocation of international resources for the rebuilding of housing, communications infrastructure, schools, and healthcare facilities. One of the central components of ITA in Croatia was the reconstruction of the housing stock that had been destroyed or damaged during the war. With support from the European Union, Sweden, Switzerland, and USAID, more than 145,000 housing units were restored. The Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees Housing (OPRH) provided free housing for over 20,000 IDPs and ethnic Serbs returning to their original homes. UNDP, the EBRD, and the World Bank supported infrastructure projects focused on restoring electricity, water supply, roads, and schools in areas heavily affected by the conflict. Particular attention was given to regions in Eastern Croatia, including Vukovar, Osijek, and Knin. One flagship initiative, Community Revitalization through Infrastructure, actively engaged local communities in the planning and implementation of reconstruction projects, according to Kornfein I. (2010). Croatia also became a regional leader in humanitarian demining. In 1998, the Croatian Mine Action Centre (CROMAC) was established. With financial backing from the European Union, Japan, Canada, and Norway, Croatia launched an ambitious demining programme that cleared over 1,200 square kilometers of contaminated land. This not only enabled the resumption of agricultural activity but also contributed to the broader socio-economic reintegration of affected regions, according to Lefebvre S., McDermott R. (2009). Despite these

notable achievements in both infrastructure and institutional development, the Croatian model also exhibited certain limitations:

- Politicization of the return process: The reintegration of internally displaced persons – particularly those of Serbian ethnicity – was complicated by political sensitivities, which hindered community integration.

- Unequal distribution of international aid: Funding and projects were often concentrated in central regions of the country, while remote and border areas remained marginalized and under-resourced.

- Insufficient long-term monitoring: A lack of robust follow-up mechanisms meant that some reconstruction projects – especially in the SME sector – suffered from reduced sustainability over time.

Nevertheless, the Croatian case is widely considered a benchmark example of a hybrid model of post-conflict recovery. It successfully combined humanitarian interventions, infrastructure rehabilitation, security sector reform, and justice sector transformation into a unified strategic framework.

7. The role of IMF

In recent 20 years, the *International Monetary Fund (IMF)* has significantly expanded its technical assistance to post-conflict countries. The share of post-conflict support provided by the IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department rose from approximately 15 percent of total assistance in 1995 to around 23 percent by 2004 (see Table 3). Altogether, 27 post-conflict countries and territories have received fiscal assistance from the IMF.

Countries were selected based on having experienced major conflicts, following definitions established by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the Centre for Systemic Peace's "mag" index. Eligible countries met two conditions: conflicts began after 1970 and continued or ended between 1990 and 2003, and registered a social disruption score of at least 3. Some exceptions, such as Albania, Guinea-Bissau, and Yemen, were included despite slightly lower scores due to their recognized need for post-conflict support.

In the early 2000s, IMF fiscal assistance for these nations averaged about 21 person-years annually. Major beneficiaries in FY2004 included Afghanistan, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, Mozambique, and Rwanda, alongside substantial aid directed to Iraq. More than half of the assistance focused on revenue policy and administration, crucial for funding reconstruction efforts, while the rest addressed public expenditure management.

IMF assistance typically ranges from policy advice to strengthening technical and institutional capacities

Table 3

IMF Technical Assistance to Postconflict Countries on Fiscal Issues, FY1995–2004 (in person years)

Area	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Public expenditure management	6.1	6.4	7.3	8.7	7.2	8.6	9.7	7.6	7.5	8.9
Revenue policy and administration	8.4	10.6	10.5	12.9	9.6	9.9	15.5	11.1	14.9	12.8
Other	0.0	1.0	1.1	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.3
Total	14.4	18.0	19.0	21.6	16.8	19.7	26.1	19.3	22.9	22.0
(In percent of total IMF fiscal affairs technical assistance)	15.3	18.3	18.2	20.9	15.4	18.5	23.3	19.8	24.3	23.1
Memorandum items:										
Number of countries and territories	15	19	16	16	16	18	21	23	21	24

Source: prepared on the data of IMF (2004)

through short-term missions, training, and resident advisors. Importantly, assistance is provided only upon request by national authorities, ensuring local ownership of reforms. Continued technical support heavily depends on progress in implementing recommendations.

Initial efforts prioritize designing comprehensive strategies for rebuilding fiscal institutions, starting with assessment missions to identify weaknesses. Donor participation during these assessments has promoted coordination among technical assistance providers, aligning efforts around common fiscal management strategies. Subsequent specialized missions by the IMF and other organizations target specific priority areas. Long-term advisors often play a crucial role during the early stages.

Finally, effective rebuilding of fiscal institutions requires parallel reforms, particularly strengthening central banks and national statistics offices. In newly formed states, developing an efficient banking system to support government cash handling and payment operations is essential for restoring administrative functionality.

8. Conclusions

The analysis of international practices in mobilizing technical assistance for post-conflict recovery reveals that the effectiveness of such assistance is determined not solely by the volume of resources accumulated, but primarily by the depth of institutional integration, the transparency of administrative mechanisms, and the recipient country's capacity for strategic planning and transformation. The cases of Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Georgia, and Croatia demonstrate that systematic coordination between donor institutions and national governments, accountability guarantees, the involvement of civil society, and the introduction of digital monitoring tools are critical prerequisites for the successful deployment and implementation of international technical assistance (ITA) in post-conflict environments. These examples show that ITA can fulfill not only a recovery-oriented function but also an institutionally transformative one –

advancing modernization of public administration, the digitalization of public services, the development of human capital, and the establishment of long-term resilience to external shocks. At the same time, in the absence of proper coordination, monitoring, and local engagement, ITA risks losing its transformative potential, becoming reduced to ad hoc responses with limited systemic impact. For Ukraine – currently engaged in large-scale defensive operations while simultaneously implementing an ambitious recovery programme for its de-occupied territories – drawing on international experience is of critical importance. The reviewed models underscore the need to:

- Establish a unified institutional framework for managing ITA;
- Develop a digital transparency ecosystem for aid tracking and accountability;
- Create sectoral platforms for strategic coordination with donors;
- Integrate local communities and civil society into planning and oversight processes.

Adapting best international practices to the Ukrainian context will make it possible to avoid previously observed failures, strengthen Ukraine's credibility as an aid recipient, and transform ITA from a tool of emergency response into a catalyst for sustainable, inclusive, and equitable recovery. It is important to note that not all analyzed cases represent full-fledged territorial de-occupation in the legal or politico-territorial sense. In several instances, the focus was on restoring governmental functions or implementing stabilization measures in areas that had experienced foreign military control or the erosion of effective sovereignty. Nonetheless, a unifying feature across all reviewed cases is the central role played by international technical assistance as a primary instrument of recovery and reconstruction.

9. Directions for Future Research

On the basis of the conclusions drawn from the comparative analysis of international technical assistance (ITA) practices in post-conflict contexts, several avenues for further investigations are being

planned: development of a contextualized model of ITA governance for Ukraine's post-conflict recovery, assessment of digital transparency mechanisms in aid administration considering the central role of digital ecosystems in ensuring accountability and donor confidence, and comparative study of donor coordination platforms and sectoral integration models to investigate how different countries have established and operationalized donor-government

coordination structures – particularly those based on sector-wide approaches – would provide valuable lessons for Ukraine in aligning aid flows with strategic development priorities. These future research directions aim to enhance both the theoretical understanding and the practical effectiveness of international technical assistance as a strategic lever for Ukraine's sustainable and sovereign post-conflict recovery.

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