

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS OF NATIONAL CONSOLIDATION IN THE CONTEXT OF UKRAINE'S POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

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Abstract. Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine has brought the complex and multidimensional issue of post-war reconstruction to the forefront, as it directly affects the level of national consolidation. There is an increasing demand for rigorous academic research into the factors that will influence social cohesion during periods of significant change. This study aims to identify the socio-economic factors influencing national consolidation in Ukraine during the post-war reconstruction phase and analyse their impact. The study focuses on the processes of national consolidation within the context of Ukraine's post-war socioeconomic transformation. An interdisciplinary approach is adopted, combining elements of political science, sociology and economic analysis. Methods of theoretical generalisation, structural and logical analysis, and comparative and prospective analysis are employed to enable the systematisation of key socio-economic factors and the identification of the mechanisms through which they affect social cohesion. The findings reveal the main socio-economic factors of post-war reconstruction, including potential regional development disparities, socio-economic inequality, labour market transformation, the housing challenge, access to public services, demographic changes, the management of international assistance, and associated institutional risks. It has been established that these factors have an ambivalent nature of impact: they may either strengthen national consolidation by ensuring inclusiveness and social justice or weaken it by deepening social and regional disparities. The study thus demonstrates the necessity of proactive state policy-making in the field of reconstruction, with a view to minimising the risks of social fragmentation and strengthening social cohesion. The practical value of the findings lies in their potential use for developing post-war reconstruction strategies aimed at reinforcing national consolidation and enhancing the resilience of Ukrainian society to post-war challenges.

Keywords: national consolidation, post-war reconstruction, socio-economic factors, social cohesion, social justice, social resilience, labour market, demographic change, international aid management, corruption risks.

JEL Classification: O15, I38, H53, R58

1. Introduction

The relevance of this study is predicated on the fact that, in the context of large-scale wartime destruction in Ukraine, demographic shifts, migration dynamics, and the anticipated increase in international assistance at the post-war stage, new socio-economic realities are emerging that will have a direct impact on processes of national consolidation during the post-war reconstruction period. Concurrently, the prevailing academic discourse exhibits an inadequate focus on a thorough examination of the socio-economic factors underpinning the consolidation of post-war societies,

notably in the context of Ukraine. The majority of studies either concentrate on the political and identity-related dimensions of unity or examine economic reconstruction without adequately considering its social implications.

There is a clear need for an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the social, economic and political dimensions of analysis. This study is based on the premise that the nature and outcomes of post-war reconstruction depend largely on the extent to which the accompanying socio-economic processes are inclusive, equitable and balanced.

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This article aims to identify the socio-economic factors influencing national consolidation in Ukraine during the post-war reconstruction phase, and to determine the nature and potential consequences of their impact. To this end, the following objectives have been set: identifying the key socio-economic factors of post-war reconstruction; analysing the mechanisms through which they impact social cohesion; and assessing the risks and opportunities they create for national consolidation.

2. Literature Review

The issue of the socio-economic factors of national consolidation within the context of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction is addressed in two main areas of scholarly literature: (1) national consolidation, and (2) post-war reconstruction.

Even prior to the large-scale invasion, Ukrainian scholars had identified the problem of insufficient consolidation within Ukrainian society. They had assessed the level of national cohesion and examined the causes and drivers of conflictual dynamics in social relations (Pirozhkov et al., 2017). They proposed a consolidation model, stating that 'the consolidation of society requires the implementation of integrative processes occurring at the level of interaction among social groups, communities, norms, values, and interests' (p. 133). However, these findings must be reconsidered in light of the transformative impact of the war.

The collective monograph *Post-War Reconstruction of Ukraine: Legal, Political and Economic Challenges in Historical Perspective* (Stratonov, 2025) addresses a wide range of issues related to Ukraine's post-war recovery. This study is particularly interested in the chapter examining the impact of war on the consolidation of the Ukrainian nation and value transformations (Bodnar & Oliinyk, 2025, pp. 44–55). This chapter highlights the relationship between shifts in societal values and the mechanisms for maintaining national unity in the face of external threats.

T. Burlai and V. Kostyrytsia emphasise the need to strengthen social solidarity within Ukrainian society. They conceptualise social solidarity as a key factor in enhancing the country's socio-economic resilience during martial law and in the post-war period. They identify internal risks associated with declining social cohesion, such as decreasing interpersonal trust, reduced social tolerance and weakening horizontal solidarity. These factors pose challenges for post-war recovery. In response, they propose approaches aimed at reinforcing post-war solidarity (Burlai & Kostyrytsia, 2025).

R. Horbyk and J. Perović (2025) observe that 'once the security situation stabilises, Ukraine will face serious internal challenges that may strain the unity once vital to resisting Russian aggression'.

The study by Y. Gorodnichenko, I. Sologoub and B. Weder di Mauro (2022) analyses a system of economic and social factors. According to the authors, the Russian threat is likely to remain a consolidating force (p. 11). L. Kistersky and A. Zadoia (2024) also offer a comprehensive examination of post-war reconstruction challenges, outlining a vision for the development of modern institutions during post-war economic recovery and highlighting the role of socio-demographic factors.

T. Becker, Y. Gorodnichenko, and B. Weder di Mauro summarise the principles, stages, and policies necessary for Ukraine's profound modernisation. They argue that Ukraine's recovery could serve as a model for post-war reconstruction programmes in other countries. They contend that the recovery process will be a long-term endeavour, focusing not only on rebuilding physical infrastructure and productive capacity, but also on broader structural transformation. 'Establishing and maintaining the credibility of reforms over many years – and through potential changes in government – will be crucial for attracting external funding and mobilising domestic investment' (2025, p. 294).

Scholars also examine policy instruments that could ensure an effective post-war economic recovery. Z. Sinaj, F. Vela and G. Shaip (2024), for example, analyse public policy tools, emphasising the importance of good governance and anti-corruption measures.

This edited volume by S. Nate (2025) provides forward-looking analyses of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction processes. It discusses key issues for rebuilding the country, including institutional transformations, economic constraints, social stability and environmental recovery.

A number of studies focus on the financing of Ukraine's reconstruction (Kudrjashov, 2024; Ryazanova et al., 2025; Tkachenko, 2024) and on post-war recovery strategies (Semenenko et al., 2025; Shpakova and Shpakov, 2023). Particular attention is paid to the development of the social services market in Ukraine and how it has adapted to the growing number of vulnerable groups (Dernova et al., 2023). The importance of social entrepreneurship and innovation in the context of post-war recovery is also emphasised (Zalievskya-Shyshak and Shyshak, 2024).

In an analysis of post-war economic recovery in other countries, Ukrainian scholars have considered the potential application of these strategies in Ukraine (Kravchenko et al., 2023; Kravchenko et al., 2024). However, it is the contention of the present study that the case of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction will be highly distinctive, which limits the direct transferability of external models.

A substantial body of research has addressed the sources of reconstruction financing, investment conditions, institutional barriers and the effectiveness

of monetary and fiscal policies. While scholars argue that international financial assistance will be a decisive factor, they also emphasise that it is insufficient without comprehensive structural reforms. In particular, Petrukha et al. (2025, p. 207) emphasise the need for tax reform aimed at reducing the administrative burden on businesses, alongside the importance of infrastructure investment as a driver of economic growth.

L. Ilchenko-Syuyva and J. Tkachuk (2025) present an innovative approach to the development of a welfare state in the post-war era. Their model is based on the principles of universal social guarantees, targeted assistance and an insurance-based approach to social protection, as well as stimulating economic activity. Key reform priorities include reintegrating veterans, modernising healthcare and education systems, and decentralising social policy.

International organisations have made an important contribution to this field. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), for example, has developed recommendations to strengthen recovery architecture and improve government coordination and donor alignment. The World Bank (2023) has examined the issue of human capital losses in Ukraine resulting from the war.

A range of challenges that are expected to shape Ukraine's post-war reconstruction have been identified by national and international institutions. These challenges are interconnected and concurrent, and include large-scale physical destruction, severe labour shortages, macroeconomic imbalances and growing social problems. Existing assessments most frequently highlight Ukraine's macroeconomic vulnerability, shortage of workers, corruption, lack of financing and limited institutional capacity. Among these, constraints on institutional capacity in the implementation of post-war reconstruction programmes are likely to be one of the most significant impediments to the recovery process. Effective reconstruction requires substantial financial resources, robust anti-corruption measures, and streamlined administrative procedures (OECD, 2023).

According to the World Bank's assessment, the transport, energy, housing, industry and agriculture sectors will require the largest share of post-war reconstruction financing (World Bank, 2025). While Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine continues, public expenditure remains focused primarily on emergency repairs and early recovery measures in housing, energy, education, transport and other essential sectors.

Recent studies demonstrate that Russian aggression has led to large-scale degradation of human capital, resulting from demographic losses, forced migration, disrupted educational and professional trajectories,

and deteriorating public health (Landesmann et al., 2024). The contraction and distortion of the labour force, including the outflow of highly skilled workers, increases the risk of long-term declines in productivity and innovation capacity. This creates critical constraints for post-war reconstruction, requiring not only the restoration of physical infrastructure, but also active policies to rebuild and develop human capital. Consequently, human capital emerges as a pivotal factor in ensuring the sustainability of Ukraine's post-war development (Riabinina, 2024; Shpakova and Shpakov, 2023).

Despite growing scholarly interest in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction in recent years, contemporary research remains largely focused on macroeconomic recovery parameters, institutional reforms and international assistance. The social consequences of these processes, particularly their impact on national consolidation, have received far less attention. Consequently, the existing body of research reveals an imbalance between the analysis of economic reconstruction mechanisms and an understanding of their implications for social cohesion.

The question of how socio-economic factors influence the formation or erosion of national consolidation in the post-war period remains largely unexplored. In most studies, socio-economic processes are examined in isolation from the issue of social unity. This restricts the ability to gain a comprehensive understanding of the potential risks that may emerge during the post-war recovery phase.

Recognising that post-war reconstruction is a profoundly social process as well as an economic one is important. This involves redistributing resources, shifting social statuses and roles, transforming the labour market and reconfiguring citizens' expectations of the state. These processes create structural conditions that can either strengthen or erode trust, solidarity and perceptions of fairness – key elements of national consolidation. Neglecting this dimension could lead to the underestimation of potential challenges during the reconstruction phase. It is therefore essential to acknowledge that national consolidation in the post-war period will be shaped by a wide range of interrelated factors, with socio-economic factors playing a decisive role.

In this context, particular importance should be attached to both the *ex post* analysis of post-war transformations and the early identification of potential risks to national consolidation that may arise during Ukraine's reconstruction. This allows a shift from a reactive to a proactive model of public policy, which is oriented towards preventing social conflicts and strengthening societal unity.

The key research problem is the lack of a comprehensive analysis of the impact of socio-economic factors on

post-war reconstruction and national consolidation in Ukraine. The core rationale of the present study is to address this research gap.

3. Methodology

The study is based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines tools from political science, sociology and economics with the aim of conducting a comprehensive analysis of the impact of socio-economic factors on national consolidation in the context of post-war reconstruction. The methodological framework of the study is based on a combination of structural-functional and systems approaches, which allows post-war reconstruction to be viewed as a holistic process in which economic transformations interact directly with social processes and influence the level of social cohesion.

The study's analytical framework is based on the concept of national consolidation as a multidimensional process involving trust, social solidarity, perceived justice and the willingness to take collective action. In this context, socio-economic factors are considered to be the structural determinants that influence the conditions that strengthen or weaken these elements.

The identification of key factors was carried out based on the following four criteria: (1) their systemic significance for post-war reconstruction processes, (2) their potential to influence the distribution of resources and social opportunities, (3) their potential to generate social tensions or integrative effects, and (4) their relevance to contemporary transformational processes in Ukraine. This methodological approach not only allows for the classification of socio-economic factors, but also reveals the ambivalent nature of their impact. In other words, it shows under what conditions these factors may act as drivers of national consolidation or sources of societal fragmentation.

4. Definition of the Content and Significance of National Consolidation in the Context of War and the Post-War Stage of State Development

The concept of national consolidation is understood as a combination of societal unity, trust in state institutions, horizontal solidarity, and related dimensions of social cohesion. It is important to note that the concept of 'national consolidation' is not yet an established term in English-language academic discourse. The concept's significance is distributed across various categories, including nation-building, social cohesion, the formation of national identity, democratic consolidation, and related domains. Therefore, the primary task is to apply the term 'national consolidation' and to conceptualise it theoretically for presentation within English-language scholarship. This will enable the identification of socio-economic

factors of national consolidation within the context of Ukraine's future post-war reconstruction.

In this study, national consolidation is theorised as a dynamic, multidimensional process of strengthening internal societal unity. The concept is founded upon the alignment of collective identity, the legitimacy of political institutions, and a shared vision of the state's future. This is of particular importance for states in conditions of war, as well as at the stage of their post-war reconstruction.

The structure of national consolidation includes the following five dimensions: (1) the identity dimension, covering issues of shared national identity, unity and the formation of a 'we-community'; (2) the political-institutional dimension, covering citizens' trust in the state, the legitimacy of authority and the state's capacity to act as an integrator; (3) the social dimension, involving social trust, solidarity and reducing societal polarisation; (4) the normative-value dimension, covering shared values and coherent narratives regarding the assessment of war and post-war reconstruction; (5) the temporal dimension, involving re-evaluating the past and constructing a shared future.

National consolidation does not imply an absence of conflict or an exceptional level of social homogeneity. Rather, it refers to society's and the state's institutionalised capacity to manage social, political, regional and other differences in such a way that they do not escalate into destructive confrontations that undermine political unity. In this sense, conflict is an inherent feature of a pluralistic society, not an anomaly, and the level of consolidation is determined by the ability of institutions and social actors to channel these differences into legitimate political interaction. This capacity requires not only effective state institutions, but also a culture of trust, mutual recognition and acceptance of diversity within a shared political space. Therefore, national consolidation is a combination of the state's institutional capacity and societal social integration.

In this assessment, the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine will represent not only an economic and infrastructural process, but also a critical stage in the consolidation of the nation. It will entail reconfiguring the fundamental principles of coexistence within the political community. While the war strengthens unity through the effect of a shared threat, it also produces deep social differentiation in the form of different traumatic experiences of war and loss, internal and external displacement, participation in the armed forces and volunteering. All of these factors will shape a heterogeneous social landscape in post-war Ukraine. In this context, the post-war reconstruction process will be crucial in determining whether these differences become integrative factors or lines of division. The task of state and non-state institutions is to prevent the latter.

First and foremost, Ukraine's post-war reconstruction will involve a redistribution of resources across sectors, regions and social groups. Decisions regarding which regions will be given priority in the recovery, which groups will have access to social support, and how a balance will be struck between compensation for losses and investment in long-term development – all of this will shape public perceptions of the fairness of government policy. Assessments of the extent to which resource distribution is perceived as fair or unfair will directly affect levels of trust in institutions and, accordingly, citizens' willingness to identify with the state as a shared political project. Consequently, the socio-economic policy of reconstruction will become a key mechanism either for strengthening or for eroding national consolidation.

The second dimension of post-war reconstruction relates to restoring and transforming institutional trust. In post-war conditions, the state's governance capacity will be put to the test. The extent to which it can ensure security, restore basic public services, guarantee rights and include citizens in decision-making processes will largely determine its legitimacy. Post-war reconstruction will contribute to an increase in trust, both vertical (citizens–state) and horizontal (among social groups), if it is carried out in a transparent, inclusive, and effective manner and is not accompanied by corruption scandals. Otherwise, institutional weaknesses will become a source of socio-political fragmentation.

The third aspect pertains to the construction of a shared narrative of the war and Ukraine's future as an element of symbolic politics. Post-war reconstruction will be accompanied by practices with a pronounced symbolic dimension, including memorialisation, public debates on responsibility, and the formation of collective memory. It is precisely during this period that the determination will be made as to whether the war narrative will be integrative, that is, whether it will recognise the plurality of experiences and incorporate them into a shared history. This will determine whether collective memory becomes a resource for consolidation or a source of long-term social conflict.

The fourth dimension is the institutionalisation of social diversity. Post-war society will become even more diverse, including internally displaced persons, veterans, civilians who have lived under occupation, diaspora communities and citizens returning from abroad. At the same time, the number of people requiring social assistance will increase significantly. Consolidation under these conditions will require the establishment of mechanisms that enable different social groups to coexist within a shared political space. Reconstruction should facilitate such inclusion through targeted public policies in areas such as housing provision, employment, education, rehabilitation and psychological support.

Finally, the process of post-war reconstruction should be seen as an opportunity to establish a new social

contract in Ukraine. This would provide an opportunity to reconsider the relationship between the state and its citizens, including expectations regarding fairness, responsibility and development priorities. The establishment of long-term institutional rules during this period will determine whether the political community will be capable of sustaining unity in the future.

Thus, post-war reconstruction can be a process not only of restoring destroyed infrastructure, but also of comprehensive socio-political transformation. Within this framework, there should be a transition from the situational unity of the wartime period to a stable, institutionalised form of national consolidation. The outcome will determine whether post-war Ukrainian society becomes more integrated and cohesive, or conversely, enters a phase of deep internal fragmentation.

5. Defining the Socio-Economic Determinants of National Consolidation

The focus now turns to identifying the socio-economic determinants of national consolidation within the context of Ukraine's post-war development. These determinants can be understood as a set of interrelated conditions, policies and processes that shape the distribution of resources, access to economic opportunities, levels of social protection and the overall quality of life. During the post-war reconstruction phase, they will significantly impact levels of trust, perceptions of justice, and the willingness of different social groups to integrate into a shared political space. They will acquire particular importance during this period, facilitating the transformation of wartime cohesion into a stable, institutionalised form of national consolidation during Ukraine's post-war recovery.

First and foremost, the fairness of resource allocation in the reconstruction process will be a key determinant. The post-war state will have substantial resources at its disposal for rebuilding infrastructure, housing, the economy and society. However, it will not merely be a question of the volume of these resources, but also of how they are distributed and how this is perceived by society. Perceptions of injustice may be generated by uneven regional recovery, preferential treatment of certain social groups and a lack of transparency in procedures. This would undermine trust in the state and potentially intensify social tensions. Conversely, transparent, accountable and inclusive resource allocation mechanisms foster a sense of shared participation in reconstruction, reinforcing perceptions of the state as a fair arbiter.

Reducing socio-economic inequality is closely linked to this, as it has been exacerbated by the war. Significant disparities are emerging between regions depending on the extent of the destruction, occupation or security conditions experienced. At the same time,

pronounced divisions may also arise between social groups with different wartime experiences, such as internally displaced persons, residents of de-occupied territories, citizens who remained in safer areas and those who left the country. Should such inequalities not be reduced but instead become entrenched in the social structure, there is a risk that they will transform into durable lines of division, thereby complicating the formation of a unified social space. Consequently, the state's ability to mitigate these disparities and avert their institutionalisation as a prevailing social norm is imperative for ensuring consolidation.

The employment provision and broad economic integration of the population are to be accorded a significant role in this regard. Access to employment is not merely an economic category; it is also a social one, insofar as it determines the degree of an individual's inclusion in society. It is evident that periods of elevated unemployment and constrained access to economic opportunities have the potential to exacerbate marginalisation, engender social dissatisfaction, and contribute to the radicalisation of public attitudes. In contrast, effective employment policies, job creation, support for entrepreneurship and the integration of various population groups into the labour market – including internally displaced persons and returnees from abroad – will foster a sense of belonging and social significance. In this sense, economic participation leads to broader social and political integration.

The contemporary Ukrainian labour market is characterised by a number of paradoxical features. A salient example of this phenomenon is the concurrent existence of acute labour shortages and a relatively high level of unemployment. However, the number of officially registered unemployed persons remains low. According to the most recent data published by the National Bank of Ukraine (May 2026), the number of individuals officially registered as unemployed was 94.3 thousand (National Bank of Ukraine, 2026). Concurrently, the shadow economy accounts for approximately three million employed individuals (Matuszak, 2026). Ukrainian employers continue to encounter significant challenges in the recruitment process. The phenomenon of labour shortages can be attributed to a number of factors, including the emigration of young people, the mobilisation of men into the Armed Forces, and concerns regarding military mobilisation. Concomitantly, Ukraine's most valuable asset is its people (World Bank, 2025). Therefore, programmes facilitating the return of refugees, the reintegration of veterans, and broader labour market recovery are likely to be just as important for post-war reconstruction as capital inflows and investment in infrastructure restoration.

The system of social protection is equally significant, performing not only a compensatory function, but

also an integrative one in the context of post-war transformation. While social policy is intended to mitigate the consequences of war by supporting the most vulnerable groups, it must also strike a balance between targeting and universality. Excessive selectivity in assistance could encourage competition between social groups for scarce resources, whereas a more universal approach is more likely to foster a sense of equality and shared identity. Accordingly, in the post-war reconstruction phase, social policy should be a key instrument for maintaining social stability and preventing fragmentation.

A further key issue is regional development and spatial balance. Post-war reconstruction could lead to a 'two-speed' economy, in which certain regions recover more quickly, attracting greater investment, while others remain peripheral. Such imbalances could have economic, political, and identity-related consequences. Therefore, integrating affected and de-occupied regions, investing in their development and ensuring they have equal access to opportunities during reconstruction are essential conditions for national consolidation.

In this context, housing policy and related population return processes will remain highly significant. The large-scale displacement of citizens resulting from the war has already altered Ukraine's social structure and created numerous challenges for local communities. Access to housing will be essential for stability, and competition for limited resources may inevitably lead to local conflicts. At the same time, state policies focusing on housing provision, the integration of internally displaced persons and encouraging population return will help to rebuild social ties and foster a sense of belonging within a shared social space.

The level of trust in economic institutions will also be of considerable importance. The degree of transparency within the tax system, the efficacy of anti-corruption mechanisms, and the predictability of business regulations will collectively influence citizens' perceptions of the fairness and reliability of the economic order. Should economic rules be perceived as unjust, this will have a detrimental effect not only on economic activity but also on general trust in the state. Conversely, the establishment of transparent and comprehensible rules will contribute to state legitimacy and strengthen consolidation processes in Ukraine's post-war development.

Finally, the level of citizen engagement in reconstruction processes will be a crucial post-war determinant. Inclusiveness and participatory decision-making will foster a sense of ownership of the state and responsibility for its future among citizens. Involving local communities, strengthening local self-government mechanisms and supporting civic initiatives will encourage the population to become active participants in the post-war recovery process.

This will reinforce horizontal social ties and strengthen political unity.

Thus, the socio-economic factors influencing national consolidation in the post-war period extend far beyond infrastructural reconstruction. These determinants will not only shape future levels of prosperity, but also the nature of social relations, the degree of trust, and societal perceptions of justice. Different social groups will be integrated into a single political community through mechanisms of resource distribution, access to economic opportunities, social protection, and participation in reconstruction processes. Consequently, effective socio-economic policy in the post-war phase is a key precondition for transitioning from wartime situational unity to stable, institutionalised national consolidation. Conversely, policy failures in this area could result in new lines of social division becoming entrenched and state cohesion being weakened.

6. Potential Impact of Socio-Economic Factors on National Consolidation in Ukraine in the Post-War Phase

In post-war Ukraine, the challenges of national consolidation are likely to be predominantly shaped by socio-economic processes. This is because these processes will directly determine the nature of interactions between different social groups, the level of trust in the state and how justice is perceived. These factors are fundamental to shared political functioning. The war has destroyed infrastructure and radically transformed the social structure of society. This transformation is expected to continue, exacerbating inequalities and generating new divisions. Without effective reconstruction policies, these divisions could become entrenched and even institutionalised.

One of the key challenges may be the perception of injustice in the distribution of reconstruction resources. As the state will be responsible for accumulating and redistributing substantial financial flows, both domestic and international, a lack of transparency or selectivity in the allocation of funding to regions or social groups may generate perceptions of discrimination. Questions concerning the prioritisation of post-war reconstruction may be particularly sensitive. If certain territories or population groups receive greater support without sufficient justification, this could lead to competition for resources and mutual accusations, ultimately undermining the state's perception as a fair integrator. In such a case, socio-economic policy could shift from being a tool for consolidation to being a driver of fragmentation.

Another closely related problem is that of deepening socio-economic inequality. In the post-war period, Ukraine may experience persistent disparities between regions characterised by varying degrees of destruction,

security and access to investment. At the same time, inequalities may also arise between social groups who have experienced the war differently: internally displaced persons; residents of de-occupied territories; citizens who remained in relatively safe regions; and those who have spent extended periods abroad. If these differences are not mitigated, they could lead to the formation of long-term social identities that compete for resources and recognition. This would make it more difficult to create a shared, consolidated space that is undergoing reconstruction and entering a new phase of functioning.

A serious challenge may also arise in relation to employment and economic integration. Large-scale economic destruction, loss of production capacity and structural changes to the labour market could result in high unemployment or unequal access to economic opportunities. In such circumstances, certain population groups risk becoming subject to prolonged marginalisation. This will not only reduce their economic activity, but also undermine their sense of belonging to a shared society. Without adequate economic inclusion mechanisms, this could lead to social discontent, distrust of the state and radicalisation of political behaviour.

Equally important is the potential for the social protection system to become dysfunctional. During the post-war period, the state will need to balance its limited resources with high social expectations. Excessive selectivity in social assistance could lead to perceptions of injustice and competition among beneficiary groups. Conversely, excessive universalisation could dilute the targeting of support, reducing its effectiveness. Incoherent social policy carries the risk of creating hierarchies between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' recipients of assistance, which would undermine social solidarity directly.

Significant sources of tension may also stem from imbalances in spatial development. For example, if reconstruction processes are concentrated in large cities or more secure regions while heavily affected territories are left on the margins of economic recovery, this could lead to feelings of alienation and intensify regional tensions. This asymmetry will reproduce inequalities and create conditions for political disintegration, as residents of certain regions may weaken their identification with the national project.

One particular challenge will be the issue of housing and the related processes of internal displacement and population return. Large-scale population movements during the war have created new social structures in which local communities and newcomers may compete for resources, infrastructure and social services. Insufficient housing provision or unequal access to housing could lead to local conflicts. From a broader post-war perspective, this could undermine social cohesion. Furthermore, the return to de-occupied

territories may be accompanied by tensions arising from differing wartime experiences and divergent expectations of the state's role.

Another potential problem is low trust in economic institutions, particularly in cases of widespread corruption or opaque rules governing resource allocation. If citizens perceive economic processes as unfair or as being controlled by narrow interest groups, this will not only undermine economic activity, but also the state's overall legitimacy. In such circumstances, the economic sphere becomes a source of tension, thereby complicating consolidation processes.

Finally, insufficient citizen participation in reconstruction processes may present a significant challenge. Decisions made in a centralised manner without the involvement of local communities will generate feelings of alienation and passivity. Without participatory mechanisms, citizens are deprived of the opportunity to influence resource allocation and priority-setting, which weakens their sense of identification with the state as a shared project. Consequently, reconstruction may be perceived as an externally imposed process rather than a collective endeavour with a shared future.

Thus, in post-war Ukraine, socio-economic factors may act as both key drivers and major obstacles to national consolidation. All of the outlined challenges have one thing in common: they are linked not only to the objective distribution of resources, but also to how this is perceived in terms of justice, equality and inclusion. If these challenges are not addressed promptly and systematically, there is a risk that post-war reconstruction processes will not foster social unity, but instead create new divisions. In the long term, this will hinder the development of post-war Ukraine as an integrated political community.

The question of how applicable the post-war reconstruction experience of other countries is to Ukraine remains highly pertinent. In our view, there is no historical precedent that can serve as a complete analogue for the Ukrainian case. While Ukraine is unique, the experience of certain European countries can still offer valuable insights into adopting successful practices and avoiding pitfalls in the reconstruction process. Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, experienced extensive infrastructure destruction, large-scale population displacement and substantial international involvement in reconstruction efforts. The implementation of infrastructure projects, in the absence of effective national institutions, has been demonstrated to be insufficient to ensure sustainable outcomes. Conversely, Croatia's experience offers valuable insights into the analysis of the reintegration of formerly occupied territories, the restoration of housing stock, the social reintegration of veterans, and the utilisation of tourism as a catalyst for economic growth.

Despite the undeniable value of these examples, Ukraine's situation has several unique features that make it impossible to simply replicate the experiences of other countries. Firstly, the Russo-Ukrainian war is taking place in the context of a digital economy and the widespread deployment of advanced technologies. Secondly, Ukraine's reconstruction as a candidate country for European Union membership is inextricably linked to the implementation of European standards and institutional reforms. Thirdly, large-scale physical destruction is occurring alongside the functioning of a market economy and a dynamic private sector. Finally, reconstruction efforts began before hostilities ceased, which distinguishes Ukraine from most historical cases of post-war recovery. Consequently, Ukraine can only draw upon the post-war reconstruction experience of other countries selectively, adapting successful practices to its own institutional, economic and socio-political context. This approach allows Ukraine to learn from history while acknowledging the unique challenges it faces today.

7. Conclusions

Through this study, the following three questions are addressed:

(1) Which socio-economic factors will influence national consolidation in Ukraine during the post-war reconstruction phase?

(2) How will these factors exert their influence?

(3) What is the nature of this influence, and is it necessary to begin mitigating its potential risks today?

The post-war reconstruction of Ukraine is expected to take place amid profound socio-economic transformation. These processes will determine not only the pace of economic recovery, but also the level of national consolidation. In this context, it is important to recognise that economic processes are not socially neutral; they will either foster a sense of unity and fairness, or conversely, create new divisions in society. The key socio-economic factors identified below are, in authors' opinion, the most significant in this regard.

1. *The risk of uneven regional economic recovery.* Different territories of Ukraine have experienced varying levels of destruction and loss as a result of the war. Post-war reconstruction processes are also likely to be asymmetric. While some regions may recover rapidly, others may remain in prolonged stagnation. This could undermine horizontal social solidarity. Without effective equalisation policies, this situation could become a long-term source of social dissatisfaction and regional alienation, threatening national consolidation.

2. *Socio-economic inequality and significant income differentiation.* The war has exacerbated wealth disparities: some citizens have lost everything, while others have adapted or even improved their socio-economic position. In the post-war period, this gap may

widen further, particularly if there is unequal access to reconstruction resources, international assistance or investment. This will increase the risk of perceived social injustice, which is one of the most powerful destabilising factors for national cohesion. If a significant proportion of the population feels excluded from reconstruction processes, this could lead to protest attitudes and distrust of the state, which would consequently erode consolidation. Therefore, preventing these developments should be a policy priority.

3. *Labour market structure and levels of employment.* This issue encompasses the employment of veterans, internally displaced persons, demobilised individuals, returnees from abroad and other social groups. Consequently, the state must ensure the implementation of effective mechanisms to facilitate economic reintegration and labour market inclusion.

4. *The housing problem and access to basic infrastructure.* The destruction of housing stock, mass population displacement and the resulting need for large-scale construction can lead to unequal access to housing. If the allocation of housing resources is not transparent or is perceived as unfair, this can lead to social tensions between different groups. As housing is a fundamental condition of social stability, its scarcity or unequal distribution will directly affect trust in the state and perceptions of justice.

5. *Access to public services and the quality of social services.* Pressure on healthcare, education and social protection systems will increase significantly in the post-war period. If the state is unable to ensure basic quality and accessibility standards, this could lead to social fragmentation. Conversely, effective social policy could be a powerful unifying force, fostering trust and a sense of shared purpose. Therefore, the impact of this factor is ambivalent; it may either strengthen or weaken consolidation, depending on the quality of governance.

6. *Demographic change and mass migration of the working-age population.* These processes may lead to a shortage of human capital and structural imbalances in the labour market. Furthermore, whether or not migrants return will create new social divisions between those who have stayed and those who have left. This will affect mutual perceptions, levels of trust and social solidarity. If the state is unable to create genuine incentives for return and reintegration, this factor could have a long-term disintegrating effect.

7. *The governance of international assistance and reconstruction resources.* The significant volumes of material, technical and financial resources that will flow into Ukraine after the war will create opportunities for reconstruction, but also risks. In cases of corruption, a lack of transparency or inefficient use of resources, perceptions of the unfair distribution of benefits will intensify, thereby undermining trust in institutions. Conversely, transparent and inclusive governance could contribute to societal consolidation.

The present study sets out to argue that socio-economic factors of post-war reconstruction will have a decisive yet ambivalent impact on national consolidation in Ukraine. The majority of these factors carry a potential risk of social fragmentation if they unfold under conditions of inequality, injustice, and institutional weakness. Conversely, these same factors can also serve as a foundation for strengthening unity, provided that policies ensuring inclusiveness, equal access, and transparency are deliberately implemented.

Consequently, the establishment of institutional mechanisms aimed at mitigating these risks is of critical importance in the present context of ongoing warfare. Such proactive preparation constitutes a strategic prerequisite for preserving national unity in the post-war period.

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