

**JEL Classification: H56, P51, Q18**

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE RESTORATION OF RURAL AREAS AFTER ARMED CONFLICTS: LESSONS FOR UKRAINE

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Abstract. *The article examines the international experience of rural area recovery after armed conflicts and its potential application in Ukraine. The relevance of the topic is determined by the necessity to restore the socio-economic potential of rural areas affected by military actions, taking into account the best global practices. To identify effective approaches, the study analyzed the experience of countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. In particular, the article discusses models of socio-economic development of rural communities, institutional mechanisms for supporting the agricultural sector, measures to rehabilitate infrastructure, and promote social cohesion. As a result of the research, key factors for successful recovery were identified: public-private partnership, integration of international financial resources, involvement of local communities, and adaptation of measures to cultural and historical conditions. Recommendations are proposed for adapting foreign experience to the Ukrainian context, specifically through the establishment of specialized agri-financial public-private partnership funds that will combine state, private, and international resources. The research results can be utilized in the process of developing strategies for the post-war recovery of rural areas in Ukraine, promoting their socio-economic stabilization and sustainable development.*

Key words: *post-war reconstruction, rural areas, international experience, socio-economic development, public-private partnership, agro-finance fund, infrastructure reconstruction, sustainable development, Ukraine.*

Introduction.

Rural areas of Ukraine have suffered significant destruction as a result of military actions, leading to socio-economic challenges, loss of infrastructure, degradation of natural resources, and population migration. In the current context of Ukraine's post-war recovery, the study of international experience in rural reconstruction after armed conflicts is particularly relevant. The experience of countries that have undergone post-conflict recovery, including the Balkan region, the Middle East and Latin America, provides valuable practical insights into socio-economic stabilization, the development of the agro-industrial sector, and infrastructure reconstruction. Adapting international approaches to the realities of Ukraine will ensure the effectiveness of rural recovery



policies, promote social cohesion, and support sustainable development. The proposed recommendations take into account a comprehensive approach to post-war rural reconstruction, including economic, social, and infrastructural aspects. The aim of this study is to analyze the international experience of rural recovery after armed conflicts in order to develop recommendations for applying the most effective practices in the process of post-war recovery of rural areas in Ukraine.

Main text.

The recovery of rural areas after armed conflicts is a complex and multidimensional process that requires a comprehensive approach to addressing socio-economic, infrastructural, and environmental challenges. Armed conflicts result in significant destruction of the material base of rural communities, destabilization of social ties, and degradation of natural resources, necessitating urgent measures to restore the socio-economic potential of the affected areas.

The concept of “rural area recovery” encompasses a wide range of measures aimed at the economic, social, infrastructural, and environmental rehabilitation of affected regions. The economic aspect involves the restoration of production infrastructure, the creation of new jobs, the stimulation of the agro-industrial sector, and the provision of conditions for entrepreneurial development. The social component includes support for socially vulnerable groups, rehabilitation of affected individuals, and the integration of internally displaced persons and veterans into the socio-economic life of communities.

Infrastructure recovery focuses on the reconstruction of housing, transport, and utility facilities, which are crucial for the functioning of rural communities. An essential element is also environmental rehabilitation, which involves the restoration of degraded lands, pollution clean-up, and the recovery of natural ecosystems.

Post-war recovery of rural areas involves measures at various levels of governance, ranging from the national to the local. This process encompasses political stabilization aimed at ensuring peace and reducing social tensions, as well as economic stimulation, which includes the implementation of investment programs and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. Social integration of affected



population groups is a priority area that requires a comprehensive rehabilitation approach, including psychological support and the creation of conditions for social cohesion. Simultaneously, cultural revitalization contributes to preserving cultural heritage and forming shared values, which are fundamental to the stable development of communities.

An important conceptual basis for recovery is the principles of sustainable development, which aim to balance economic, social, and environmental aspects. Sustainable development implies economic resilience through income diversification and increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector. Social resilience is achieved by improving the quality of life, fostering social cohesion, and encouraging active citizen participation in recovery processes. Environmental sustainability involves the preservation of natural resources and the implementation of environmental rehabilitation measures. Institutional sustainability is ensured by creating a robust management system that facilitates effective coordination between the state, local communities, and international partners.

Given the complexity of the rural recovery process after armed conflicts, it is essential to employ a combined approach that integrates economic, social, and environmental aspects. Coordination of actions among various stakeholders — the state, businesses, international organizations, and local communities — is critically important for achieving sustainable outcomes.

The integration of socio-economic initiatives, infrastructural projects, and environmental programs ensures a comprehensive and long-term recovery of rural areas in Ukraine during the post-war period.

International experience in rural recovery after armed conflicts demonstrates a diversity of methods and approaches that take into account the specifics of the post-conflict environment, socio-economic context, and cultural characteristics of the regions. The primary methods have been shaped by successful rural recovery practices in various countries, including the Balkan region, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.



An institutional approach to rural recovery after armed conflicts is one of the most important components of a comprehensive strategy, ensuring a systematic and organized reconstruction process. This approach is based on the establishment and effective functioning of specialized institutions, coordination mechanisms, and management of recovery measures at various levels — from national to local.

The key principles of the institutional approach include:

1) Institutional coordination and management:

- establishment of centralized national and intergovernmental agencies to coordinate the recovery process;
- development of a management system at the national, regional, and local levels to ensure the efficient implementation of projects;
- formation of advisory bodies involving international experts, representatives of local communities, and the private sector.

2) Engagement of international organizations:

- active collaboration with international institutions such as the United Nations, the World bank, and the European Union, which provide financial and technical support;
- utilization of the experience of international recovery missions;
- involvement of donor organizations to finance infrastructure projects and support socially vulnerable groups.

3) Regulatory framework and strategic planning:

- development of legislative acts and government programs that regulate the recovery process;
- identification of priority reconstruction areas, including social welfare, infrastructure restoration, and economic stabilization;
- formulation of national strategies that include the creation of special funds for resource accumulation.

4) Financial mechanisms and public-private partnership (PPP):

- accumulation of resources from the state budget, the banking sector, and international donors into unified funds;



- creation of an Agro-financial public-private partnership fund as an effective mechanism for implementing infrastructural and social projects in rural communities;
- development of a system of state guarantees to reduce investment risks in rural areas.

For example, after the war in the Balkan countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo), specialized state recovery agencies were established, which operated in collaboration with the European Union and the World Bank [1]. Organizations such as HALO Trust and the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) played a crucial role in the removal of mines and explosive devices, which helped create conditions for the return of displaced persons and the restoration of infrastructure [2]. The recovery of regions in the Balkan countries was based on stimulating community development, increasing the responsibility of local authorities for attracting investments, efficiently utilizing available resources, and implementing innovations. Newly established local economic development agencies played an important role in this process by formulating territorial development strategies with a focus on social protection, particularly through the creation of new jobs [3]. In the first years following the end of hostilities, the volume of international development support for Bosnia and Herzegovina amounted to more than 20% of the gross domestic product. The level of such assistance per capita ranged from 140 to 279 US dollars [4].

An example of successful economic development and recovery amid prolonged territorial conflicts is Israel, which today possesses a robust economy primarily based on science, innovation, and advanced technologies. In the face of constant challenges, the Israeli government opted for a strategy of implementing significant conservative reforms in the banking sector and labor market, focusing on domestic demand.

During the period from 1986 to 1989, state loans in Israel had an annual rate of 2,5%, while the real GDP growth averaged 3,7% per year. This facilitated the implementation of effective reforms and business development through preferential lending to strategically important economic sectors while maintaining the country's financial stability. The key directions of economic policy included a progressive



taxation system, support for national production through state protectionism in industry and agriculture, and tax incentives for investors. This approach enables the inclusion of both low-skilled and highly skilled workers in the labor market, creating a competitive environment for enterprises and ensuring the rational utilization of labor resources by integrating innovations into production processes [5].

Rwanda serves as a vivid example of a country that, having endured military conflict, managed to restore its economy and society by adopting an economic growth model inspired by Singapore. After the tragic events of 1994, the country experienced substantial losses in the production sector and infrastructure. However, recent years have been marked by significant progress due to the implementation of a series of reforms aimed at economic recovery and social development. One of the key elements of success was thorough strategic planning and the organized functioning of state structures. The Rwandan government places a strong emphasis on economic and social transformations, focusing on creating a favorable business environment, attracting foreign investment, and developing human potential. Special attention is given to agriculture and infrastructure modernization, which contributes to improving the quality of life and reducing poverty levels. The example of Rwanda demonstrates the importance of strong state governance, the implementation of well-considered reforms, and the involvement of international support to ensure stability and economic growth [6].

Among the countries that have experienced brutal military conflicts yet managed to achieve socio-economic growth in the post-war period—despite their predominantly agrarian and underdeveloped economies—Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, and Ethiopia stand out. The primary drivers of economic recovery after the cessation of hostilities included the development of the agricultural and extractive sectors, population growth, the availability of cheap labor, and the attraction of external investments. According to the World Bank, between 2018 and 2021, the nominal GDP per capita in these countries increased as follows: by 64% in Djibouti, by 50% in Côte d'Ivoire, and by 22% in Ethiopia [7].



In Iran and Afghanistan, special interagency committees were established under the leadership of central governments with the participation of international experts.

Following the signing of the peace agreement, the Colombian government created the Agency for Reintegration and Territorial Recovery (now the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization), which focused, among other priorities, on supporting agriculture and developing rural communities. One of the key directions involved the creation of cooperatives from former combatants, which facilitated socio-economic reintegration [8].

The socially-oriented approach emphasizes the rehabilitation of social infrastructure and the support of vulnerable groups, particularly internally displaced persons and veterans. A key aspect is the integration of affected communities into socio-economic life through involvement in community initiatives and participation in recovery projects.

The economic approach focuses on creating favorable conditions for the development of small and medium-sized businesses, the restoration of the agro-industrial complex, and the stimulation of entrepreneurial activity. Important tools include the provision of microcredits, support for cooperative forms of management, and the establishment of local markets.

The infrastructural approach involves the reconstruction of residential buildings, transportation networks, and municipal infrastructure. Rebuilding destroyed towns, villages, and production facilities is a crucial factor in stabilizing the socio-economic life of areas affected by hostilities.

The environmental approach aims to restore the natural environment damaged by military actions, including land reclamation, mine clearance, and the elimination of the consequences of ecological disasters. For instance, armed conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia caused significant environmental damage, leading to the contamination of surface and groundwater, soil, and atmospheric air with toxic substances. The recovery process in the affected regions was managed by the European Agency for Reconstruction, which paid particular attention to environmental issues as part of rural development and water resource management programs [9].



A comprehensive approach involves combining several methodologies into a unified strategy that takes into account the socio-economic specificity of territories and the needs of the population. The application of public-private partnerships (PPP) is a crucial prerequisite for the accumulation of financial resources and the effective management of recovery projects [10].

Thus, international experience demonstrates the importance of a comprehensive and locally adapted approach to the recovery of rural areas. Successful post-war recovery models are based on the integration of social rehabilitation, economic development, infrastructural reconstruction, and environmental safety. Involving communities in the planning and implementation of recovery measures increases the efficiency of the process and ensures the sustainability of outcomes in the long term.

Post-war recovery of rural areas in Ukraine requires consideration of international experience, particularly European practices, which have already proven effective in addressing the consequences of armed conflicts. However, the successful implementation of such approaches necessitates their adaptation to the Ukrainian context, taking into account the country's socio-economic, cultural, and administrative specificities.

In Ukraine, the State Agency for the Restoration and Development of Infrastructure has already been established. However, we believe that it would be advisable to create a Rural Recovery Agency to coordinate reconstruction projects comprehensively, accumulate international assistance, and ensure the efficient use of resources [11;12].

To facilitate effective financial management, it is also necessary to establish regional branches of the agency that will directly cooperate with local self-governance bodies and communities. This will help ensure transparency, responsiveness, and alignment of recovery measures with local needs.

The use of public-private partnership (PPP) mechanisms, which are actively employed in EU countries to finance post-conflict recovery, requires special attention. In Ukraine, it would be appropriate to create dedicated financial instruments, particularly the PPP Agro-Financial Fund, which would accumulate funds from the



state budget, international donors, and private investors. This approach would allow for the mobilization of additional resources and reduce the financial burden on the state.

European practice also highlights the importance of involving communities in the planning and implementation of recovery measures. Before the war, Ukraine implemented participatory budgeting, which enabled local communities to take part in project development while addressing their real needs. However, with the onset of the war, participatory budgeting was suspended.

Therefore, adapting European practices to Ukrainian realities should take into account the multidimensional nature of post-war recovery. It is essential to ensure institutional coordination, financial support through PPP mechanisms, social rehabilitation, and environmental restoration. The implementation of a comprehensive approach will enhance the effectiveness of rural reconstruction measures and foster sustainable development in the long term.

Conclusions.

Therefore, in the process of post-war recovery of rural areas in Ukraine, it is crucial to take into account international experience, particularly European practices that have demonstrated their effectiveness in various countries. Analyzing the examples of the Balkan states, Colombia, and other regions, it can be concluded that the success of recovery measures largely depends on a comprehensive approach that includes institutional coordination, financial support, socio-economic reintegration, and community involvement. An institutional approach based on the establishment of specialized recovery management bodies enables effective coordination of actions at both the national and local levels. Particularly significant is the involvement of international organizations and donors, which ensures the necessary volume of financial resources. The use of public-private partnership mechanisms will promote the active involvement of private capital in reconstruction projects, a strategy that has already proven effective. Adapting these practices in Ukraine will enable the creation of financial funds with state guarantees, which will stimulate investment activity and the development of agriculture. Social rehabilitation is an essential component of post-war recovery since infrastructure and economic restoration are impossible without



considering the needs of the population. The experience of Colombia demonstrates that comprehensive reintegration programs, which include vocational training, psychological support, and social cohesion, contribute to reducing social tension. In Ukraine, it is necessary to develop support programs for internally displaced persons and war veterans, which will facilitate their successful integration into communities. A significant aspect is also the involvement of communities in the planning and implementation of recovery projects. European experience shows the effectiveness of a participatory approach, where local residents become active participants in decision-making, thereby increasing the level of trust in government authorities and ensuring a more accurate consideration of local needs. Equally important is the environmental aspect, as the consequences of armed conflicts often lead to land degradation and environmental pollution. Hence, international experience in the recovery of rural areas after armed conflicts highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach that combines institutional coordination, socio-economic reintegration, environmental safety, and financial support from international partners. For Ukraine, it is critically important to take these practices into account, adapting them to national characteristics to ensure effective recovery and development of rural communities in the long term. The implementation of strategically grounded approaches will provide a solid foundation for socio-economic growth and sustainable development in the post-war period.

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Анотація. У статті досліджено міжнародний досвід відновлення сільських територій після збройних конфліктів та його можливе застосування в Україні. Актуальність теми обумовлена необхідністю відновлення соціально-економічного потенціалу сільських територій, що постраждали внаслідок військових дій, з урахуванням кращих світових практик. З метою виявлення ефективних підходів було проаналізовано досвід країн Балканського регіону, Близького Сходу, Африки та Латинської Америки. Зокрема, розглянуто моделі соціально-економічного розвитку сільських громад, інституційні механізми підтримки аграрного сектору, заходи з реабілітації інфраструктури та соціальної згуртованості. У результаті дослідження визначено ключові фактори успішного відновлення: державно-приватне партнерство, інтеграція міжнародних фінансових ресурсів, залучення місцевих громад та адаптація заходів до культурно-історичних умов. Запропоновано рекомендації щодо адаптації зарубіжного досвіду до українського контексту, зокрема через створення спеціалізованого агрофінансового фонду державно-приватного партнерства, які об'єднуюватимуть державні, приватні та міжнародні ресурси. Результати дослідження можуть бути використані в процесі розробки стратегій повоєнного відновлення сільських територій в Україні, сприяючи їх соціально-економічній стабілізації та сталому розвитку.

Ключові слова: повоєнне відновлення, сільські території, міжнародний досвід, соціально-економічний розвиток, державно-приватне партнерство, агрофінансовий фонд, інфраструктурна реконструкція, сталий розвиток, Україна.