

UKRAINE'S POST-WAR SOLIDARIZATION BASED ON INTERNATIONAL AND EU APPROACHES

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Tetiana BURLAI

Doctor of Sciences (Economics), Assistant Professor, Leading Researcher, Institute for Economics and Forecasting, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4530-9151>

btv2008@ukr.net

Vasyl KOSTRYTSIA

Member of the National Academy of Social Insurance (USA), Deputy Head of the Association of Employers' Organizations of Ukraine

kostrytsya2@gmail.com

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SUMMARY

The relevance of this article stems from the urgent need to strengthen social solidarity within Ukrainian society, recognized as a key factor in enhancing the country's socio-economic resilience during martial law and in the post-war period. The aim of the study is to develop a strategic framework for reinforcing post-war solidarity in Ukraine, along with identifying the prerequisites for its tactical implementation, drawing on contemporary international and pan-European approaches. The research adopts an interdisciplinary methodology, incorporating tools from sociology, economic theory, and public administration. The authors have obtained the following key findings: a discernible decline in the level of solidarity among Ukrainians amid the prolonged full-scale war; identification of the primary endogenous risks linked to diminishing societal cohesion; analysis of the post-conflict recovery experiences of various European states, highlighting critical challenges they encountered in restoring solidarity—insights that are highly relevant for Ukraine; and substantiation of the most effective strategic and tactical public governance approaches for fostering national unity. Within the frameworks of economic theory and public administration, the study substantiates that, in alignment with Ukraine's European integration goals and post-conflict recovery agenda, and in pursuit of a synergistic effect through integrative policy application, the most suitable public governance approaches include: the “Humanitarian Aid–Development–Peace Nexus”, the formation of a “social quality perspective”, and principles derived from modern EU cohesion policy. The scientific contribution of the article lies in its potential to inform the formulation of strategic directions for Ukraine's state policy in the context of post-war recovery and comprehensive integration into the European Union.

Keywords: *dissociation, European integration, institutional trust, post-war recovery, Russian-Ukrainian war, social dynamics, societal processes, solidarity*

INTRODUCTION

The full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, now in its fourth year, continues to inflict severe and multifaceted damage on Ukraine's national economy and society as a whole. According to consolidated international assessments, by the end of 2024, nearly 40,500 Ukrainian civilians had become victims of the war; 6.1 million Ukrainians remain at risk due to explosive remnants of war. Direct losses to Ukraine's socio-economic system have amounted to \$176 billion, while the estimated cost of reconstruction over the current decade (2025–2035) is projected at \$524 billion—almost 2.8 times the country's nominal GDP for 2024 (UNDP, 2025).

However, beyond the need for financial, material, and human resources, the effective post-war reconstruction of Ukraine also requires specific institutional conditions. One of these conditions is the solidification of Ukrainian society, which rests on the phenomenon of solidarity. According to one international definition, solidarity embodies a spirit of unity among individuals, social groups, nations, and states. It implies a shared set of interests, aspirations, and actions, along with the recognition of diverse needs and rights aimed at achieving common goals (OHCHR, n.d.).

In the academic definition provided by Ukrainian sociologists, *solidarization* refers to the process of establishing, maintaining, and reproducing solidaristic social interactions, while *solidarity* represents the social characteristic and quality of such interactions. Solidarity

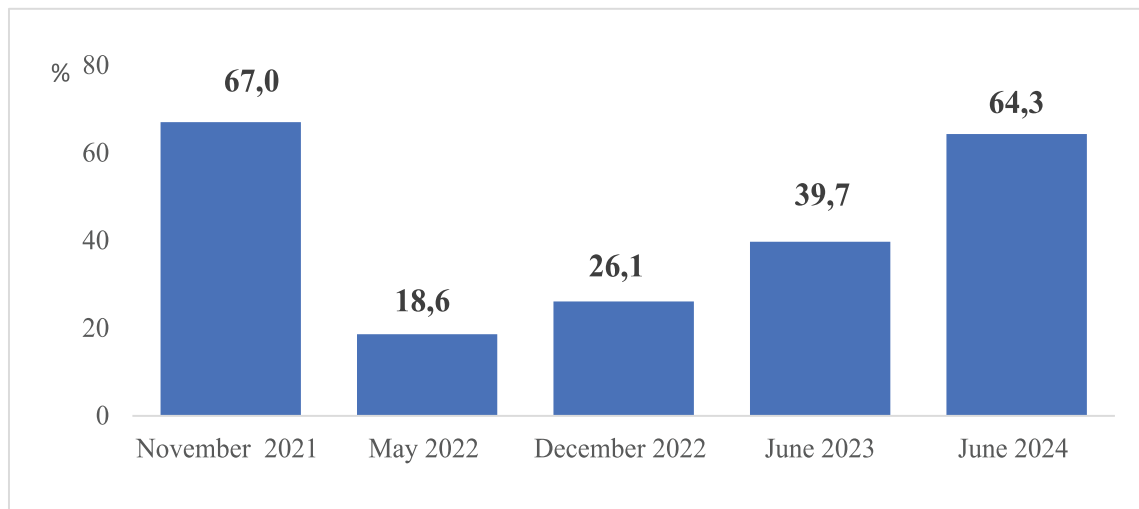
as a quality of social relations and solidarization as the process of achieving it should be considered in two main dimensions: vertical—as the relationship between citizens and the state, and horizontal—as the relationship among citizens themselves (Stepanenko, 2024).

The issue requiring scholarly attention is the emerging trend of declining solidarization within Ukrainian society amid the prolonged military confrontation, which risks leading to the development of internal social divides and growing societal tension.

Thus, a recent study conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (ISNASU, 2024) provides grounds to assert that there have been significant negative shifts in the dynamics of solidarization among Ukrainians over the three years (2022–2024) of the full-scale war. Sociologists express genuine concern regarding the data from representative surveys carried out in territories controlled by the Ukrainian government, particularly with respect to the evolving public perception of the functioning of the Ukrainian state—one of the key indicators of the state of vertical solidarization within Ukrainian society. As illustrated in Figure 1, the level of socio-political negativism (the combined share of respondents with strongly and moderately negative overall attitudes toward the functioning of the state) among Ukrainian citizens has undergone substantial changes.

Figure 1.

Level of socio-political negativism among Ukrainian citizens: combined share of respondents with strongly and moderately negative overall attitudes toward the functioning of the state, %



Source: Compiled by the authors based on data from: ISNASU (2024), pp. 17–20.

According to Figure 1, the significant level of socio-political negativism among Ukrainians regarding the functioning of the state—indicating weak vertical public solidarization—had already returned to its pre-war level by mid-2024. A similar downward trend is observed in the indicator of civic identity, which had risen sharply from 62.6% in December 2021 to nearly 80% by December 2022, after ten months of war, but then declined to 73.8% by June 2024 (ISNASU, 2024, pp. 151–158).

Since 2023, academic sociological research has documented negative developments not only in vertical but also in horizontal (interpersonal) solidarization in Ukraine. Notably, emerging lines of social division have been observed between Ukrainian citizens who left the country and those who remained, between military personnel and veterans on one side and civilians in the rear on the other, as well as across a number of other groups. According to sociological surveys conducted in 2024, only 10.5% of Ukrainians stated that they “definitely can” rely on solidaristic support from neighbours or community members in the event of serious difficulties, while 32.7% responded that they “cannot rely at all” on such support. Consequently, a societal threat is seen in the fact that *the prolonged full-scale war has “intensified the conflict-prone social potential and increased the risks of social conflict in Ukrainian society,”* which, in turn, may undermine Ukraine’s domestic political and social stability during the post-war recovery period (NASU, 2025).

In light of the above, the issue of strengthening public solidarization in Ukraine during and after the war—and developing appropriate approaches to state policy—gains renewed relevance. In this context, it is necessary first and foremost to define a suitable strategic foundation for such a policy. It should be noted that,

even under conditions of martial law, the Ukrainian government has undertaken specific steps guided by key programmatic documents such as the *Ukraine Facility Plan*, the *Memorandum of Cooperation* between Ukraine and the IMF under the *Extended Fund Facility (EFF)*, and the *Ukraine Recovery Plan (2025)*, which is based on recommendations from the annual High-Level International Conferences on Ukraine’s Recovery. These efforts are accompanied by the public monitoring and analysis tool “*Ukraine Reform Matrix*” (<https://reformmatrix.mof.gov.ua/en/index/>).

However, the aforementioned documents provide only a general framework for ongoing and future reforms, while a comprehensive national strategy for Ukraine’s post-war recovery and development remains, to date, a topic of discussion within academic, expert, and political circles.

In addition, as a tactical foundation for strengthening public solidarization in Ukraine, it is advisable to consider the approaches of the European Union’s Cohesion Policy and the potential for their adaptation to the national context. This would align with Ukraine’s European integration objectives, particularly following the official approval granted by the European Union in June 2024 to begin accession negotiations. Given the current geopolitical and military-economic environment, as well as the resistance from Eurosceptic politicians within the EU, this negotiation process is expected to be objectively complex and relatively lengthy.

Thus, the objective of this study is to substantiate a strategic framework for reinforcing post-war solidarization in Ukrainian society and to identify the prerequisites for its tactical implementation, drawing on modern international and pan-European approaches in the fields of macroeconomics and public governance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The topic under investigation has been the subject of numerous in-depth and well-structured scholarly studies. For instance, Palahnyuk (2021), through an interdisciplinary analysis, argues that social solidarity emerges from the integration of the personal solidarity potentials of the majority of society's members, which in turn leads to the convergence of societal processes toward common goals. A valuable overview of academic literature examining the phenomenon of solidarity through the lenses of sociology, as well as social and political psychology, can be found in the works of Miller (2017) and Sangiovanni & Viehoff (2023).

In his work, Garbe (2024) examined the phenomenon of solidarity within the framework of contemporary global inequality, while Sidenko (2024) explored the impact of global contexts on the prospects for solidaristic and inclusive development in Ukraine. Of particular scholarly interest are studies focused on the concept of social cohesion. Manca (2014) considers it a prerequisite for ensuring quality of life and well-being in modern society, while Green & Janmaat (2011) view it as a consequence of social attitudes and behaviours shaped by the institutional characteristics of societies. An analysis and synthesis of findings from several studies on social cohesion in countries that have experienced armed conflict is provided by Fiedler & Rohles (2021).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical foundation of our study is grounded in the concepts of social solidarity developed by prominent figures in the field of sociology such as É. Durkheim ([1933] 1960), A. Comte ([1853] 2009), F. H. Giddings (1922), A. Touraine (2000), J. Habermas (2015), and P. A. Sorokin (1962). To substantiate the strategic framework of public governance aimed at strengthening post-war solidarization in Ukraine, several theoretical constructs and applied macro-governance approaches have also been employed.

Firstly, the conceptual approach known as the *Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus* (or *Triple Nexus*), introduced by the United Nations at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 and later expanded by the OECD (OECD, 2022; 2024). This approach is aimed at the rapid recovery of countries and territories situated in so-called *fragile contexts*—including states affected by armed conflict and post-conflict states—and envisions the coordinated collaboration of international organizations, national governments, civil society, and local communities across three interconnected dimensions: humanitarian assistance, socio-economic development, and peacebuilding.

Taking into account, among other factors, the large-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, the European Union has adopted a comprehensive Triple Nexus approach to foster synergy between its humanitarian, development, and security policies—both within the EU and in relation to its partner countries (Pichon, 2025).

The article by Fonseca et al. (2018) contributes to the renewed scientific understanding of the phenomenon of social cohesion and its determinants. Cox et al. (2023) examine the opportunities and barriers to strengthening social cohesion in conflict-affected societies. The current EU Cohesion Policy and its potential transformations are analysed in the works of Rubio et al. (2024) and Margaras & Alvarez (2025). The findings of Bericat et al. (2019) confirm the importance of the social quality of life of citizens as a key factor in fostering solidarity within modern European societies.

Strategic frameworks for peacebuilding and solidarization in post-conflict societies are substantiated in Fischer's work (2004). The study by Czerska-Shaw & Dunin-Wąsowicz (2025) focuses on constructing such frameworks based on the *Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus* approach, with specific consideration of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war. In the study by Kostrytsia et al. (2024), it is argued that, under martial law, the desolidarization of Ukrainian society is exacerbated by pre-war distortions in the institution of tripartite social dialogue as defined by the ILO. Grytsenko (2024) demonstrates that post-war solidarization in Ukraine should be grounded in the national rooting of the country's socio-economic resilience.

Secondly, our study draws on *Social Quality Theory*, developed by Van der Maesen & Walker (2012), as well as its application to the analysis of societal dynamics in post-Soviet countries (Abbott et al., 2016). As a unifying foundation for Ukraine's post-war development, we consider the approach of forming a *Social Quality Perspective*, recently proposed by the International Association on Social Quality (IASQ) Board (2024).

Thirdly, this study also focuses on international and EU practices of applied implementation of the concept of social cohesion, the origins of which trace back to the work of French sociologist Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* ([1933] 1960), originally published in 1893 (Fiedler & Rohles, 2021). In applied contexts—particularly within global or national policy frameworks—the multidimensional concept of social cohesion began to gain traction in the 1990s, including within the work of institutions such as the OECD (2011), UNDP (2020), UNECE (2023), and the European Union (European Commission, 2024a; 2025), which has more than 30 years of experience implementing cohesion policy.

Notably, Articles 174–178 of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (European Union, 2012) explicitly define the goal of economic, social, and territorial cohesion among member states. Based on the Maastricht Treaty, the EU established the *Cohesion Fund* in 1993—one of the most important pan-European structural funds.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The methodological foundation of this study is an interdisciplinary approach that integrates research methods from the fields of sociology, economic theory—particularly social economics and institutionalism—and public administration. This methodology enables the examination of the sociological phenomenon of societal solidarization while accounting for the influence of economic, social, and institutional factors, such as interpersonal and institutional trust, quality of life, public policy, full-scale military conflict, post-war peacebuilding, and others. Additionally, general academic methods were employed, including analytical, systematization, comparative, statistical, and graphical methods, among others.

Alongside other sources, the study used the following data: results from the sociological monitoring conducted

by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (ISNASU, 2024); data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (with consideration of the objective limitations in collecting many official reports under martial law); data from the European Commission on the current EU cohesion policy and its reform in light of emerging socio-economic and geopolitical challenges (European Commission, 2024a; 2025); data from the UNDP Office in Ukraine (2024) regarding sociological assessments of the level of social cohesion among Ukrainians during the full-scale war with the Russian Federation; and assessments by the International Association on Social Quality (IASQ Board, 2024; Van der Maesen et al., 2023) concerning the application of the *Social Quality Perspective* approach in Eastern European countries, including Ukraine.

MAIN RESULTS

As part of the conducted research, we obtained the following key results:

(1) A downward trend in the level of solidarization within Ukrainian society has been demonstrated in the context of the prolonged full-scale war.

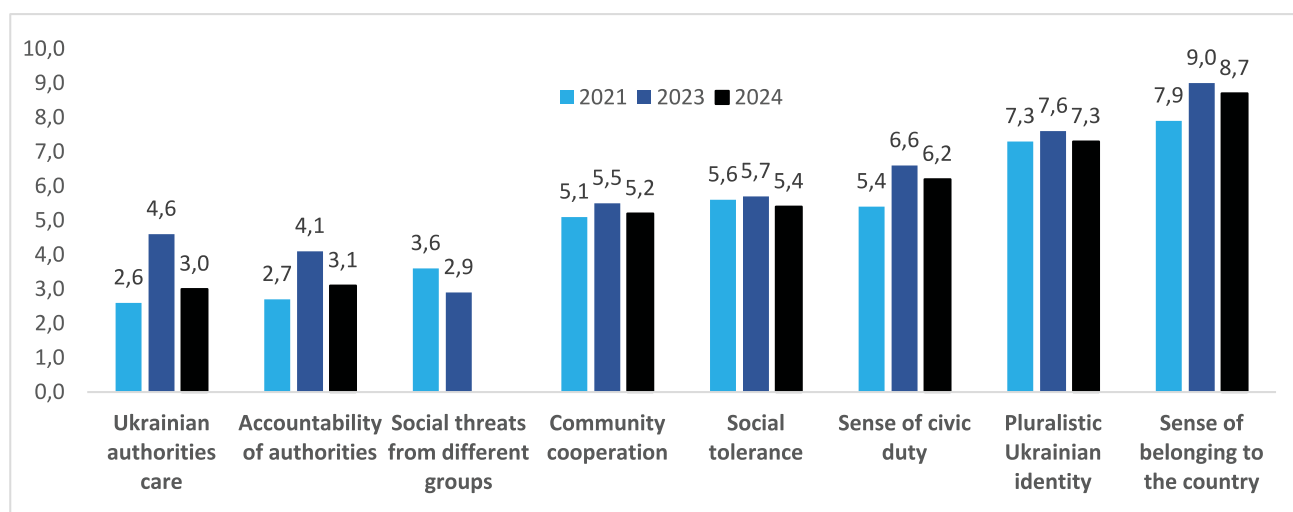
This trend was identified based on monitoring data from the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (ISNASU, 2024) and confirmed by comprehensive assessments from the UNDP Office in Ukraine (2024), which emphasized that “*social cohesion, defined broadly as the strength of relationships and solidarity among different groups and between citizens*

and institutions, is a fundamental element of the stability and prosperity of nations.” The assessments were based on eight composite indicators of social cohesion in Ukrainian society (Figure 2), calculated using a special formula and ranging from [0; 10], depending on the intensity of expression.

The current level of social cohesion in Ukraine (as of 2024) reflects both strong feelings of national identity and belonging among Ukrainians (the highest indicators), and a noticeable decline in public confidence in governing institutions and their actions (the lowest indicators) (UNDP Office in Ukraine, 2024, pp. 8–10).

Figure 2.

Composite indicators of social cohesion in Ukrainian society in 2021, 2023 and 2024



Source: UNDP Office in Ukraine (2024), p. 29.

However, the analysis of the dynamics of composite indicators in 2021, 2023, and 2024 (Figure 2) reveals a number of socially concerning developments in the solidarization process of Ukrainian society, namely:

- All composite indicators of social cohesion among Ukrainians (with the exception of the “perceived social threat from other groups” component) showed a significant increase at the onset of the full-scale war, but began to decline by the third year of the prolonged conflict. Several of these indicators are now approaching their pre-war (2021) levels;
- The indicator of perceived social threat from other groups (e.g., people from other regions, or from different linguistic, religious, etc., backgrounds), which was not even assessed in the pre-war period, has shown an upward trend throughout the war. This indicates a growing sense of threat among the majority of Ukrainians;
- A comparison of indicator values shows that the current level of social tolerance in Ukraine is lower than it was before the war, suggesting a rise in social intolerance—most often directed toward LGBT individuals, people with substance dependencies, and Roma communities;
- By the end of the third year of full-scale war, sociological data record a decline in both horizontal (interpersonal) and vertical (institutional) cohesion, reflecting diminished trust and mutual accountability—both among individuals and between citizens and state institutions.

All of the above points to a clear downward trend in societal solidarization under the harsh conditions of wartime, which poses potential societal risks and underscores the urgent need to develop a coherent state strategy and tactical measures to reinforce the cohesion of Ukrainian citizens.

(2) It has been determined that the main risks arising from the decline in solidarization among Ukrainians are of an endogenous socio-economic and socio-political nature. These risks are closely linked to Ukraine’s resilience under martial law and its post-war reconstructive recovery. Ensuring multidimensional resilience of Ukrainian society—including through enhanced social inclusivity and cohesion—plays a critical role in preserving the Ukrainian nation within the context of the modern global hybrid “war–peace” system (Heyets et al., 2023) and under the influence of global transformations driven by geopolitical confrontation, the fragmentation of the world economy, demographic shifts, and digitalization challenges (Kostytsia & Burlai, 2023). This is further compounded by the ongoing and urgent need to reduce inequalities within Ukrainian society (Blyzniuk et al., 2024).

In the context of Ukraine’s post-war recovery, it is important to take into account the repeatedly demonstrated positive correlation between social cohesion and economic growth. For instance, the World Bank, in its study of 27 transition economies, concluded

that social cohesion is closely linked to two key elements necessary for socially equitable economic growth: an inclusive civil society and adequate political institutions (Ritzen & Woolcock, 2000). Based on the experience of fast-growing developing countries, the OECD (2011) demonstrated that social cohesion is a societal value that supports long-term economic growth—among other mechanisms—through variables such as social capital, social mobility, and social inclusion.

Research conducted by the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (Sommer, 2019) substantiates the mutually reinforcing relationship between social cohesion and inclusive economic growth—defined as growth that benefits all social groups in society, in line with the UN’s interpretation for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through 2030. The study showed that not only does social cohesion institutionally contribute to economic growth, but that inclusive growth also positively correlates with social cohesion through factors such as job creation, reduction of inequality, and expanded access to education and educational outcomes.

In light of the above, the following assertion appears entirely justified: *“Societies with higher levels of social cohesion are healthier, more resilient to external shocks, and experience greater economic growth”* (UNECE, 2023, p. 28).

(3) Two key features of the current process of solidarization in Ukraine have been identified: the country’s prolonged full-scale military confrontation with the Russian Federation and its advancement along the path of European integration. The impact of the ongoing large-scale war with Russia on societal cohesion in Ukraine has been examined earlier in this study, including through characteristic sociological indicators (ISNASU, 2024; UNDP Office in Ukraine, 2024).

Equally significant is the influence of the European integration factor, particularly given that the Constitution of Ukraine enshrines the “European identity of the Ukrainian people and the irreversibility of Ukraine’s European and Euro-Atlantic course” (preamble to the Basic Law), as well as the implementation of the *“strategic course of the state toward full membership of Ukraine in the European Union and in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization”* (Articles 85 and 102).

Given these specific features, our study emphasizes the need to analyze the relevant experience of post-conflict states—primarily within the European region—as well as to examine the European Union’s experience in designing and implementing cohesion policy. This will allow us to identify key directions and opportunities for adapting such experience to the realities of Ukraine.

(4) Based on the analysis of relevant experiences from post-conflict European states, a number of challenges in ensuring post-war recovery and societal solidarization were identified—challenges that are important for Ukraine to

take into account. Given Ukraine's path toward European integration, particular attention was paid to the experiences of Croatia (an EU member state since 2013) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (an EU candidate country since 2022). On this basis, the main components of these processes were outlined, specific issues encountered were identified, and the rationale for adapting country-specific approaches to the Ukrainian context was demonstrated (see Table 1 in the appendix).

Of particular interest is the example of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which currently holds the same EU integration status as Ukraine. This post-conflict country has been included in the Reform and Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, adopted by the European Commission in 2023. The plan is structured around four pillars: gradual integration into the EU single market; fundamental reforms; enhanced financial support; and regional economic integration. With the exception of the latter, Ukraine is currently progressing along comparable reform directions through the EU's Ukraine Facility—a financial assistance program for the period 2024–2027 with a total volume of €50 billion.

It is worth noting that by 2024 – Q1 2025, Ukraine had already received €19.5 billion from the Ukraine Facility fund, having fulfilled its reform commitments to the EU (Ministry of Economy of Ukraine, 2025). In contrast, Bosnia and Herzegovina—unlike Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia—has not yet received funding from the **Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans**, as it has yet to submit to the European Commission a national reform plan covering business environment development, the green and digital transition, human capital, and the fundamentals of EU accession (European Commission, 2024b).

Nevertheless, for Ukraine, it is crucial to consider Bosnia and Herzegovina's experience in post-war recovery and societal solidarization. Notably, this experience illustrates that the continuous reliance on war-related narratives and the perpetual expectation of international aid can fragment society and contribute to the formation of an electorate with high tolerance for corruption and institutional inefficiency (Barbarić, 2023).

(5) The most effective strategic and tactical approaches for strengthening the cohesion of Ukrainian society have been substantiated, with the aim of enhancing the country's socio-economic resilience, ensuring effective post-war recovery based on sustainable economic growth, and achieving full European integration. In the context of these objectives, the most appropriate course for Ukraine—considering coherence with European integration goals and post-conflict recovery priorities, as well as the need to achieve a synergistic effect through integrative application—appears to be the combination of the following public governance approaches:

(I) the *Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus* approach;

(II) the approach of forming a *Social Quality Perspective*;

(III) approaches within the framework of the *EU Cohesion Policy*.

More detailed discussion of the proposed approaches for implementation in Ukraine follows below.

(I) The conceptual Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus (Triple Nexus) approach envisions the integration of efforts across three key areas—humanitarian assistance, socio-economic development, and peacebuilding—in war-affected and post-conflict states. This integration is achieved through cooperation among international organizations, national governments, civil society organizations, and local communities.

For Ukraine, it is essential not only to strategically develop this approach with consideration for national realities under martial law and the challenges of post-war recovery and solidarization, but also to ensure its institutional alignment with EU structures, which are already generating synergies between humanitarian policy, development policy, and security policy (Pichon, 2025). In doing so, Ukraine must also take into account the core challenges and opportunities faced by the EU in implementing this approach (Land et al., 2022).

In the post-war period, particular attention must be given to peacebuilding in Ukraine—understood as the process of healing war-related social trauma and supporting social cohesion through the instruments of state policy and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Fischer, 2004).

(II) The Social Quality Perspective approach, developed by the International Association on Social Quality (IASQ Board, 2024) as an alternative framework for understanding and shaping social development in contemporary conditions, is based on the configuration of four structural dimensions reflecting key global challenges:

- (1) the transformation of communication technologies;
- (2) the expansion of production and financial systems, along with the resulting socio-cultural disruptions;
- (3) inadequate modern urban policies and the need to humanize urban and rural relations; and
- (4) the development of new strategies to address environmental change.

Ensuring social quality in societal development—particularly in the context of a united Europe—based on this framework is seen as a forward-looking goal that requires the involvement of both national and international mechanisms (Van der Maesen et al., 2023).

The relevance of implementing the Social Quality approach within Ukraine's public governance system remains high—particularly during the phase of post-war reconstructive recovery (Burlay et al., 2022). This is partly due to the intensifying problem of poverty reduction amid ongoing military-economic shocks—a challenge that, even under peaceful conditions, is closely linked to improving quality of life through increased

employment, social inclusion, and real household income (Pisica & Crudu, 2024).

Beyond the shock effects of the full-scale war, a significant potential increase in poverty in Ukraine is also being driven by the government's practice of "freezing" social

standards for the coming years. Officially, this freeze is declared for a period of three years (as stated in the national Budget Declaration for 2025–2027), but in practice it may last nearly four years, given that the minimum wage in Ukraine is expected to remain at its April 2024 level at least until early 2028 (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Dynamics of Selected Social Standards in Ukraine in 2024 (Actual) and 2025–2027 (According to the Budget Declaration approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 751 dated June 28, 2024)

Nr.	Indicator	2024	2025	2026	2027
1	Monthly subsistence minimum per person for the following categories:				
1.1	for working-age individuals, UAH	3028 [#]	3028	3028	3028
1.2	for individuals who have lost work capacity, UAH	2361 [#]	2361	2361	2361
2	Minimum wage, UAH	8000 [*]	8000	8000	8000
3	Minimum pension, UAH	2361 ^{**}	2361	2361	2361
4	Consumer Price Index, Average Annual Change, %	105,2 [#]	109,7	109,9	108,0
5	Real Value (Adjusted for Inflation):				
5.1	Minimum Wage, % Relative to April 2024	94,8	86,4	78,6	72,8
5.2	Minimum Wage, % Relative to March 2024	94,8	86,4	78,6	72,8
6	Average Exchange Rate of the Hryvnia to the US Dollar over the Period, UAH per 1 USD	40,7 [#]	45,0	46,5	46,4
7	Value in Foreign Currency Equivalent:				
7.1	Minimum Monthly Wage, USD	196,6 [*]	177,8	172,0	172,4
7.2	Minimum Monthly Pension, USD	58,0 ^{**}	52,5	50,8	50,9

* as of April 1, 2024; ** as of March 1, 2024; # as stipulated in the State Budget of Ukraine for 2024.

Source: Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 751 dated June 28, 2024; authors' calculations.

As can be seen from the data in Table 2, Ukraine is expected to experience a deepening trend of declining real incomes and growing impoverishment among a significant portion of the population in the coming years. This will result from the reduction of social standards when assessed in foreign currency equivalent: the minimum wage is projected to fall from \$196.6 in 2024 to \$172.4 in 2027, while the minimum pension will decrease from \$58.0 to \$50.9, respectively.

An additional factor exacerbating the risk of widespread poverty in Ukraine is the reduction in public spending on social protection. In 2025, compared to the previous year, Ukraine's state budget expenditures for social protection were cut by 40.4 billion UAH, or 8.8%.

A significant social concern associated with the situation described above is that, in practice, it implies a substantial decline in the real incomes of Ukrainians and, ultimately, leads to a noticeable increase in poverty and further social stratification within society. The heavy burden of martial law has expanded the scale of poverty in Ukraine. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2025), since the onset of the military invasion, the poverty rate in Ukraine has nearly doubled, currently affecting around 9

million Ukrainians—more than a quarter of the country's population.

At the same time, the level of extreme poverty in Ukraine, according to researchers from the Institute for Demography and Social Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, increased sevenfold over the first two years of the full-scale war—rising from 1.3% in 2021 to 8.8% in 2023. This form of poverty is measured as the share of the population on the brink of physical survival (Reznychenko, 2025).

As a result, these trends create additional preconditions for the desolidarization of Ukrainian society, since a key indicator of social cohesion is the well-being of the vast majority of citizens (Blyzniuk et al., 2024).

(III) The pan-European Cohesion Policy, which integrates approaches from regional, economic, social, environmental, and employment policies, can be viewed as the European Union's applied implementation of the concepts of cross-country integration and social cohesion. As emphasized by the European Commission, "cohesion policy is at the heart of European solidarity" and encompasses all EU regions and cities with the aim of supporting job creation, business competitiveness,

economic growth, environmentally sustainable development, and improved quality of life for citizens.

The application of econometric modeling has repeatedly demonstrated the significant positive impact of EU cohesion policy on economic growth and convergence among member states (Pieńkowski & Berkowitz, 2016). This policy has proven especially effective for countries that joined the EU between 2004 and 2013.

In particular, among Central and Eastern European (CEE) member states, GDP per capita increased from 52% of the EU-27 average in 2004 to nearly 80% in 2021. For the 2021–2027 period, €392 billion has been allocated for the implementation of EU Cohesion Policy—representing one-third of the Union’s total budget—distributed across 398 different projects at national, regional, and transnational levels. The bulk of this funding is concentrated in less developed EU countries and regions to foster their real convergence with more developed areas (European Commission, 2025).

According to the European Commission, this policy direction ensures substantial investment returns: every euro invested through cohesion funds during 2014–2027 is expected to generate €1.30 in GDP by 2030, and

nearly triple by the end of 2043 (European Commission, 2024a). While the effectiveness of cohesion policy as a tool for development and solidarization within the EU has been time-tested, certain evolving factors—including EU enlargement plans—have created the need for its adjustment and further improvement.

For Ukraine, as a candidate country, the experience of its cross-border and interregional cooperation with the EU is of critical importance. Currently, the key principles of this cooperation are defined in Chapter 27 of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union and are being implemented in practice, including through the Interreg NEXT cross-border and transnational cooperation programs: Poland–Ukraine, Hungary–Slovakia–Romania–Ukraine, Black Sea Basin, Romania–Ukraine, as well as the Danube Regional Programme, all funded by the EU.

However, a notable issue is that Ukraine is currently only partially covered by EU Cohesion Policy at the intergovernmental level, while little attention is given to implementing corresponding approaches at the intra-state level. This points to clear gaps within the country’s system of public regulation.

DISCUSSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Future academic research, grounded in institutional methodology, should focus on substantiating the directions and mechanisms necessary for strengthening the solidarization of Ukrainian society based on nationally rooted economic development. According to academic justification provided by Grytsenko (2024), nationally rooted economic development refers to the advancement of national production that relies

primarily on existing domestic resources while fully utilizing international economic cooperation to serve the country’s own interests.

However, there remains an objective need for the scholarly conceptualization of how this approach can be practically integrated with the model of national development within the framework of supranational unions such as the European Union.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the severe human and economic losses and the deep social traumas inflicted on Ukrainian society by the full-scale war, solidarization remains a vital factor in its socio-economic resilience.

Both domestic and international sociological studies have recorded a high level of national self-awareness and a strong sense of belonging to the country among Ukrainians since the onset of the large-scale military invasion in February 2022. However, sociologists also point to the emergence of a clear downward trend in interpersonal trust, social tolerance, and horizontal solidarity in Ukraine—factors that generate additional risks for the country’s post-war reconstructive recovery.

Thus, the need to develop public governance approaches becomes increasingly relevant—approaches capable of simultaneously addressing several of Ukraine’s most critical challenges: strengthening societal solidarization, ensuring the effective reconstructive recovery of the country’s socio-economic system in the post-war period, and achieving full European integration.

In light of these objectives, the most appropriate course of action for Ukraine—considering coherence with the goals of European integration and post-conflict recovery, as well as the need to achieve a synergistic effect through integrative application—appears to be the combination of the following approaches: (I) the *Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus* approach; (II) the *Social Quality Perspective* approach; and (III) approaches within the framework of the modern EU Cohesion Policy.

Proper adjustments in the implementation of EU Cohesion Policy approaches can be carried out through the refinement and detailing of the National Programs included in Ukraine’s Recovery Plan (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2025). These programs have already been presented at the International Conferences on Ukraine’s Recovery held in 2022–2024 in Lugano, London, and Berlin, respectively, as well as those to be presented at the upcoming conference in Rome in July 2025.

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ANNEX

Table 1.

The experience of selected European states in societal solidarization and post-conflict recovery: lessons for Ukraine

Country	Status	Components of experience	Problems	Adaptation in Ukraine
Bosnia and Herzegovina	post-conflict state (1992–1995 war period); EU candidate country (2022)	<p>The foundation of post-war recovery was formed by international assistance programs aimed at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) restoring physical assets; (ii) accelerating economic recovery; (iii) facilitating the return of refugees and internally displaced persons; (iv) laying the groundwork for sustainable economic growth. <p>For post-war societal solidarization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – with the support of the EU and international donors, various programs and projects were implemented: • to align the national educational, scientific, and cultural space with the European framework; • to eliminate ethnic and ethno-political discrimination; • to support national reforms aimed at combating corruption, poverty, and social exclusion; <p>– the activities of national and international NGOs aimed at post-war societal cohesion were intensified, with a focus on supporting women, youth, and children affected by war-related violence, as well as individuals with disabilities resulting from the war.</p>	<p>The post-war order in Bosnia and Herzegovina created an unstable state with the constant presence of military and civilian international organizations, effectively rendering it a permanent international (semi-) protectorate.</p> <p>There was a lack of strong state institutions capable of effectively managing the country's post-war reconstruction process, as well as an absence of institutional mechanisms to coordinate the actions of international donors and the national government.</p> <p>Post-conflict governance practices have shown that the continuous reliance on war-related narratives and the ongoing expectation of international aid contribute to societal fragmentation and foster an electorate with high tolerance for corruption and institutional inefficiency.</p> <p>Attempts to implement structural economic, social, educational, and institutional reforms have been insufficiently successful.</p> <p>As of the end of 2024, there is no nationwide strategic framework in place to regulate cooperation with pan-European structural funds for cohesion and regional development upon EU accession.</p> <p>The national social protection system remains institutionally underdeveloped and financially unstable.</p>	<p>Adaptation is advisable primarily in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – avoiding mistakes in the planning and implementation of structural and institutional reforms; – aligning the national educational, scientific, and cultural space with the broader European framework; – eliminating manifestations of various forms of discrimination; – focusing on ensuring the financial sustainability of the national social protection system. <p>The conclusions of the European Commission (European Commission, 2024c) regarding Ukraine's European integration process should also be taken into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ukraine's request to allocate adequate support under the EU <i>Ukraine Facility</i> financing mechanism for the recovery, reconstruction, and modernization needs of subnational authorities—particularly local self-government—must be implemented in line with the principles of cohesion policy, namely subsidiarity, efficiency, accountability, and the role of subnational authorities in decision-making regarding the use of such support.

Country	Status	Components of experience	Problems	Adaptation in Ukraine
Croatia	post-conflict state (1991–1995 war period); EU member state (2013); Eurozone member (2023)	<p>The foundation of post-war recovery consisted of international assistance programs and national budgetary resources.</p> <p>For post-war societal s o l i d a r i z a t i o n : – the national government implemented macroeconomic reforms aimed at increasing income and living standards as a basis for enhancing social justice and institutional trust; – with the support of the EU and international donors, various programs and projects were implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to align the national educational, scientific, and cultural space with the European framework; • to build a financially sustainable national social protection system and establish a three-tier pension insurance system; <p>– national and international NGOs intensified their efforts to promote societal cohesion, with a focus on supporting women, youth, and children affected by war-related violence, as well as the social and professional reintegration of demobilized individuals.</p>	<p>To accelerate accession to NATO and the EU, Croatia ensured only partial democratization of the post-war recovery and societal solidarization processes. International reports published after 2013 note the re-emergence of problems in Croatian society related to ethnic discrimination and the regression of democratic processes. Experts suggest that progressive changes in this area were pursued primarily to meet NATO and EU accession requirements, and once these goals were achieved, the government showed reduced interest in addressing issues related to the guaranteed protection of human rights.</p> <p>One of the key issues involved the organized return of Croatian citizens of Serbian ethnicity, complicated by the fact that their properties had been seized or occupied by other Croatian citizens under the Law “On the Temporary Use and Management of Certain Property.” This law allowed displaced persons and refugees to use such properties as residences.</p> <p>Amendments to the Law on Areas Under Special State Concern, adopted in 2002, made property restitution possible by setting deadlines within which temporary occupants were required to vacate the premises to return homes and apartments to their rightful owners. Since evictions progressed slowly, in 2003 the government offered compensation to those owners whose properties were not returned within the designated timeframe.</p>	<p>– The distribution of the received funds should be linked to local, regional, and sectoral development strategies and must also take into account the need for medium-term budget planning, while ensuring a reliable system for tracking and reporting expenditures.</p>

Source: compiled by the authors based on: Barbarić (2023); Danylyshyn (2022); European Commission (2024b; 2024c); Haliv & Illytskyi (2025); Mygal (2022); Puljiz, et al. (2019).